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TURGOT

BY LÉON SAY

OF THE FRENCH ACADEMY

TRANSLATED BY

MELVILLE B. ANDERSON

TRANSLATOR OF HUGO'S "SHAKESPEARE"



CHICAGO

A. C. McCLURG AND COMPANY

1888

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NOTE UPON TURGOT'S WORKS.

A PART only of Turgot's works appeared during his lifetime. Among these are his

"*Reflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses*" (1766, 12mo), and his poem, of which but a few copies were printed for private distribution only;

"*Didon, poème en vers métriques hexamètres, divisé en III. chants, traduits du IV^e livre de l'Énéide de Virgile, avec le commencement de l'Énéide et les II^e, VIII^e, et X^e églogues du même*" (par Anne-Robert-Jacques Turgot). 1778. 4to, pp. 108. (Re-produced in the edition of the works published by Dupont de Nemours.)

Turgot's works were collected after his death, —

"(Œuvres de M. Turgot, ministre d'État, précédées et accompagnées de mémoires et de notes sur sa vie, son administration et ses ouvrages" (with this epigraph: "*Bonum virum facile crederes, magnum libenter.*" Tacitus). 9 vols., 8vo. Paris: printed by A. Belin. 1809-1811.

"(Œuvres de Turgot, nouvelle édition classée par ordre de matières, avec les notes de M. Dupont de Nemours, augmentée de lettres inédites, des questions

sur le commerce et d'observations et de notes nouvelles par MM. Eugène Daire et Hippolyte Dussard et précédée d'une notice sur la vie et les ouvrages de Turgot, par M. Eugène Daire." 2 vols., large 8vo. Paris : Guillaumin. 1844.

Portions of Turgot's correspondence are found in various publications, especially in the following : —

- "Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et de Turgot, 1770-1779." Edited by Ch. Henry. 1 vol., 8vo. Paris : Charavay. 1882.
- "Life and Correspondence of David Hume." Edited by John Hill Burton. 2 vols., 8vo. Edinburgh : William Tait. 1846.
- "Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume." Edited by John Hill Burton. 8vo. Edinburgh and London : Blackwood. 1849.

There exist unpublished letters from Turgot in the archives of several families, particularly in those of the Turgot family (at Lantheuil Castle), and among the descendants of Dupont de Nemours, who are settled in the United States.

TURGOT.



INTRODUCTION.

MUCH has been written about Turgot. We have been told the story of his childhood, of his youth, of his manhood. We have seen him as a timid child hiding under the furniture to avoid the scrutiny of his mother's visitors; and later, as a young man in a cassock, playing at shuttlecock with Minette, the beautiful maiden who was soon to become Madame Helvetius. The dissertations read by him as Prior of the Sorbonne, at the opening and at the closing of the session of 1750, have been preserved. We know the reasons that prompted him to renounce the priesthood, and we have seen him holding offices in the magistracy, first as Deputy-Counsellor of the Attorney-General, next as Counsellor in

he accepted a seat in a Royal Chamber empowered to judge in the place of the exiled Parliament.

We can recall the sayings of his delighted friends at the time of his appointment as Intendant of Limoges, and we know the hope that appointment awakened in Voltaire's breast: "One of the brethren has just written me that an intendant is good only for evil; I am sure you will show that he can do great good."

At Limoges he remained thirteen years, and during the twenty-five years elapsing between his admission to the Sorbonne and his departure from Limoges he did not cease to be the idol of the economists and of the Encyclopedists. He became acquainted, successively, with Quesnay, Gournay, Dupont de Nemours, Voltaire, Hume, Adam Smith, Condorcet. His correspondence is very extensive. He was a leader among men; and, what though the Duke de Choiseul could say of him in 1769 that he had not "a ministerial head," his masters, his friends, his disciples, even then deemed him the only minister capable of regulating the administration and the finances of the tottering monarchy.

A collection has been made of his letters, his plans, his memoirs, his opinions, his de-

cisions, his circulars, his reports, — of everything he wrote during the first part of his life. He can be followed almost day by day in the fulfilment of the various official duties with which he was intrusted between 1750 and 1774.

Finally, at the age of forty-seven years, prepared by a life of reflection, of study, of administrative experience, he is made a Minister. He is ready to carry out the widest and the most fruitful plans of reform. He re-establishes the freedom of the grain trade, and by this measure, justifiable as it was, he arouses the popular wrath. To the surprise of many he outrides the storm of the Bread Riots,¹ and completes his work by proclaiming freedom of labor. The abolition of the exclusive industrial corporations, or trade-guilds,² was the crowning act of his life, and his economical testament.

We have his memorials to the king, his notes, his drafts of the decrees of the Council, the preambles which he prefixed to his ministerial edicts. We know the slightest details of all that he thought, wrote, and did, during an administration of twenty months, which, brief as it was, is wonderful for its fulness and excel-

¹ La guerre des farines.

² Les corporations et les maîtrises.

lence. He succumbs after a vigorous struggle overcome by the coalition of interests and prejudices, or, as Voltaire puts it, "of financiers, red-heels, and bigwigs," and his biographers indulge in interminable discussions about the causes of his failure.

His fall is attributed to his undertaking too much at once, to his want of flexibility of character, to his being animated by a spirit of sect; and writers endeavor to ascertain the qualities of a successful statesman which he lacked. In order the better to understand him, they follow him into retirement, where they find him occupied with scientific experiments and with the exercises in prosody which interested him from early youth.

At last, at the age of fifty-four years, he dies of gout, which had not ceased to rack him for more than twenty years,—a hereditary malady that caused him to reply to Malesherbes, who was reproaching him with too great haste: "What would you have me do? The needs of the people are enormous, and in my family we die of gout at fifty."

For all those who have told the story of his life and have piously collected his slightest

upon him as an unlucky reformer who sank miserably under the blows of adversaries less strong, indeed, but surely better advised than he, — men who were far from being eager to know and apply great economic truths, but thoroughly trained to pull all the wires of profitable court intrigue.

All those who have lived most with Turgot, and have never ceased to love and admire him, repeat with one voice: "Turgot had not the qualities that assure success." I would draw from his life-work a very different conclusion, and would treat him, not as defeated, but as victorious. For if he failed in the eighteenth century, he has prevailed in the nineteenth. He is the founder of our present political economy, and, by the freedom of labor which he bequeathed us, he has stamped our century with its most distinctive mark.

Thanks to freedom of labor, the nineteenth is the century of industry on the grand scale, of the application of great scientific, geographical, economic discoveries to the development of labor and wealth. By deeply imbuing the French and European consciousness with the principles of free labor, Turgot prepared the way for the conquest of the world by Occidental civilization, and it is the nineteenth century that has effected this conquest.

It is a remarkable sign of the personal influence of Turgot upon the activity of our century, that his inspiration seems to this day needed to animate the principles he enunciated. In order to prevent the century from deviating from the path Turgot marked out for it, we are compelled to cling more firmly than ever to his person, to his life, to his acts, and to invoke his help in struggles very similar to those he sustained almost a century and a quarter ago.

Freedom of labor, which was for him the beginning and the end of all economic laws, is to-day the object of the sharpest attacks. It is no longer the privileged, the wealthy, the magistracy, the classes formerly termed ruling, that combine, as once they did against Turgot. The present reaction against him is found among the workingmen, among the sons of those who seemed intoxicated with delight when his edict went forth abolishing the exclusive industrial corporations. The workingmen are seeking to load themselves again with their broken fetters, thinking to find protection in what was formerly — though they have forgotten this — the instrument of their oppression.

The nineteenth is the true century of Turgot, because it is that in which his ideas have

been applied, and in which he has borne manifest sway over minds and over things. Is it to be the only century in which his principles shall receive so salutary a vindication? Will the coming century burn what we have adored? There is no lack of gloomy prophets who menace us with this; but their prognostications will not be fulfilled. Turgot has entered into his glory; he has entered into it for all time, and the French political economy, of which he is the real founder, has nailed its flag to the mast.

CHAPTER I.

HIS FAMILY. — CHILDHOOD. — EDUCATION. —
THE SORBONNE.

TURGOT'S family was one of the most ancient of Normandy, and Condorcet asserts that the name, in the language of the old Northmen, meant "Thor-God." The family was divided, in the sixteenth century, into two branches, — the Turgots of Tourailles and the Turgots of Saint-Clair. Their common ancestor, Louis Turgot, had been Master of Requests under Francis, Duke of Alençon, and counsellor in the Supreme Court of Caen. His eldest son, John, was the first Turgot of Tourailles, and his second son, Antony, the first Turgot of Saint-Clair.

In 1621 a Turgot of Tourailles had an encounter with a certain Montchrétien; and singularly enough this passage at arms connected for the first time the name of Turgot with that of the science it was to illustrate. Montchré-

playwright, and a soldier of adventure, was intrusted, by the chiefs of the Protestant party at the time of the insurrection of La Rochelle, with the task of rallying the Protestants of Normandy. In a letter written from Caen on the 14th of October, 1621, Malherbe thus relates the upshot of this expedition.

"The rebellion in Normandy was checkmated by the death of a certain Montchrétien, the organizer of the whole affair. Accompanied by six others of the same class, he came, about a week ago, at eight o'clock in the evening, to the hostelry of a place called Les Tourailles, some twelve leagues from here. Word was immediately sent to the lord of the place, who forthwith appeared with fifteen or twenty musketeers." The band was destroyed, and the lord of Tourailles, who slew its chief, was named Claude Turgot.

Now this Montchrétien who was slain by a Turgot had written not merely tragedies, but a book of remarkable sagacity upon trade and manufactures; and this book, dated 1615, bears the then absolutely unique title of "Treatise of Political Economy." Never before had this term been employed in the French language to designate the economic science; and the man who first employed it was slain by the hand of an ancestor of the precursor of

J. B. Say in France, and of Adam Smith in England.

The grandfather of the great Turgot was descended from Antony Turgot, of Saint-Clair, but belonged to a younger branch of the family. He had been Intendant of the Generality of Metz and of that of Tours. The great Turgot's father, Michael Étienne, was successively Master of Requests, Provost of the Merchants of Paris, member of the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-lettres, Councillor of State, and President of the Grand Council. Among his maternal ancestors he counted the famous juriconsult Pierre Pithou, and of all his ancestors he was proudest of this one. He gained just celebrity as Provost of the Merchants. He undertook to drain the marshy quarters of Paris, extending from the boulevards to Montmartre, and constructed an immense sewer, to which his name was attached, and which still exists, in part, under Saint-Lazare Street. To Michael Étienne Turgot is due one of the finest plans¹ for the defence of Paris which have been made, and this also bears his name. It was at his initiative that the Grenelle Street fountain was erected by Bouchardon, to whom he intrusted its execution.

After resigning his post as Provost of the Merchants, he found himself able to devote to

his private affairs a part of the leisure left him from his duties as a Councillor of State. His ancestral estates were situated between Caen, Falaise, Bayeux, and the sea, in that part of Normandy which to-day forms the Department of Calvados. In his honor these domains were erected into a marquisate bearing the name of Soumont. Long afterward, in memory of the great Minister, the Marquis of Soumont was authorized to bear the title of Marquis Turgot.

The Provost of the Merchants resided not at Soumont but at Bons, — Bons-Turgot, as Dupont de Nemours terms it, — a little commune not far from Soumont. Among his estates, farms, and grazing-lands were those of Laulne and of Brucourt, of which our Turgot bore the name. At the Sorbonne he was called the Abbé de Laulne; and upon leaving that seat of learning he assumed the name of Turgot of Brucourt.

Lantheuil Castle, the cradle of the family, situated near Bons, was then in the hands of the elder branch, the Turgots of Saint-Clair, but was afterward annexed to the marquisate. The present Marquis Turgot has collected the family archives at Lantheuil Castle. To these he has kindly given me access. I have held in my hands the first draft of the letter of the

24th of August, 1774, addressed by the great Turgot to the king, in order, as the writer says, to place before His Majesty's eyes the engagement His Majesty has made to support his minister in the execution of the latter's plans of economy. The note is written off-hand, with some erasures. It seemed to me I heard the firm thrilling tones of the great man, — those tones so gentle to his friends, so harsh to his opponents. In these same archives I found numerous traces of the examination of the papers made after Turgot's death by Malesherbes, for the purpose of obtaining the notes, documents, and manuscripts to be published by Dupont de Nemours as the first edition of Turgot's works.

On the 1st of February, 1751, the Provost of the Merchants died, leaving three sons and a daughter. The eldest son rose to the bench, and died as Chief-Justice of the Parliament of Paris; the second son, known as Chevalier Turgot, was scholar, governor, soldier, — for a time he governed Guiana; the third son was the great Turgot. The daughter had married the Duke de Saint-Aignan.

Anne Robert Jacques Turgot was born in Paris on the 10th of May, 1727. As a boy he was studious, shy, and awkward; and his youthful timidity never quite forsook him. He

said one day to King Louis XVI., "My words are somewhat confused, for I am ill at ease." "I am aware that you are shy," replied the king.

He was educated at the College of Louis the Great and at the Seminary of Saint-Sulpice. As early as 1743, at the age of sixteen, we find him attending the lectures of the Faculty of Theology; and in 1746, on account of his youth, a special dispensation was necessary before he could be admitted to the examinations. This dispensation was granted him by the Faculty "in consideration of the very potent recommendation of the King, and also in memory of the services rendered during his administration by M. Turgot's illustrious father to the City of Paris and to the various departments of the Faculty itself."

This dispensation is dated October 1, 1746. Six months later, on the 11th of March, 1747, the Provost of the Merchants, writing to his second son, the Chevalier, then at Malta, reports that the young Abbé had sustained his baccalaureate thesis with signal success. He wrote: —

"Your brother the Abbé has sustained his thesis with all possible distinction, wholly surpassing my expectations; for he exhibited not the least trepidation,

mense hall of the outer Sorbonne ; it was admirably furnished and lighted, and, large as it is, was full of listeners during the whole five hours' discussion.

“ The Archbishop of Tours presided. The Assembly of the Clergy, at present in session at Paris, of which he is also the chairman, came in a body to hear this thesis. My lord the Archbishop of Paris was there in full canonicals. His surpliced cross-bearer held the cross at the door of his coach, came before him into the hall, and sat in front of him upon a footstool, bearing the great and beautiful archiepiscopal cross of gilded silver. After the Archbishop's departure, the Pope's Nuncio came in and remained above an hour and a half. On going out he remarked to the Abbé, and to the doctors of the Sorbonne who accompanied him, and to your brother, and to M. de Creil, that he had been present on many such occasions, but that he had never heard a thesis sustained with so much ability.

“ The Archbishop of Tours descended from his chair and embraced the Abbé, assuring him that he had acquitted himself eminently well. The next day, the Archbishop being at Versailles, the king asked him if he had attended the Assembly of the Clergy on the day before. He answered no ; that he had presided at the discussion of a thesis. The king inquired who sustained the thesis, and was informed that it was the Abbé Turgot. To the king's further inquiry whether the Abbé had sustained it well, the Archbishop was good enough to reply that he had never heard a thesis sustained with equal distinc-

tion, and added, 'Your Majesty has no greater or better subject than the Abbé Turgot. All this is exceedingly flattering to us, and it must give you equal pleasure.'

Two years later, on the 7th of April, 1749, young Turgot composed the first economic paper that has come down to us from him. It is in the form of a letter written from the Seminary to his fellow-student, the Abbé de Cicé. Its aim is to refute Law's system, which had been published twenty years before by the Abbé Terrasson.

According to Turgot, metallic money is not a mere sign. "As a species of merchandise," said he, "money is, not the sign, but the common measure, of other kinds of merchandise." In refuting the widespread notion that metallic coin is a mere token deriving its value from the royal stamp, Turgot made short work of the visionaries who then thought, as they thought later during the Revolution, and as many still think, that the state can defray public expenses by issuing irredeemable bills transformed by law into compulsory currency.

"The king," said he, "would gain a mere temporary relief by the issuing of bills, — or rather by their multiplication, — for this relief would cease as soon as commodities began to

increase in price in proportion to the number of the bills." "If forty years later," comments Dupont de Nemours, "the majority of the citizens composing the Constituent Assembly had possessed as much knowledge of the subject as Turgot so early exhibited, France might have been spared the Assignats."

Early in June, 1749, the young Abbé de Laulne was admitted to the House of the Sorbonne to take his final degrees. The House of the Sorbonne was an association formed for the purpose of attending the lectures and exercises of the Faculty of Theology. The society was made up of about one hundred ecclesiastics, — bishops, vicars-general, canons, priests of Paris and of the principal cities of the kingdom. Their great House, which still exists as the Sorbonne, contained thirty-six apartments, with a chapel, a valuable library, and a garden. The servants were employed by the society, and the members dined together. As many of the members lived elsewhere, a certain number of apartments were allotted to a half-score of students, and one of these students was the son of the Provost of the Merchants.

The master's degree, for which he was preparing, required a certain number of theses: first, the *Tentative* for the bachelor's degree, which Turgot had already attained; then the

minor, the *Sorbonnat*, and the *major*. On the last day of December, 1749, six months after his admission to the Sorbonne, he was elected Prior. The priorship was an honor rendered to distinguished young men, and to the sons of illustrious parents. The Prior was the chairman of the assemblies, where it was his privilege and his duty to pronounce discourses in Latin, usually upon religious subjects. Turgot presided for the first time on the 16th of May, 1750, when the Abbé Morellet, who was to become his life-long friend and his passionate admirer, was admitted to take his final examinations; and again on the 13th of August, when Morellet was made a fellow of the society.

Thus, from 1743 to 1750, Turgot had unremittingly pursued theological studies; and these studies, with the exercises which formed their necessary complement, had ripened his mind to a very remarkable degree. "In order to win distinction in theological exercises," says Morellet, "some talent was requisite, and some adroitness in singling out and answering objections. Turgot often used to say, smilingly, 'My dear Abbé, it is only we who have disputed for the master's degree who know what it is to reason exactly.'"

Turgot read two Latin dissertations, one at the opening and the other at the close of the

session of 1750. The first of these was upon "The Advantages that the Establishment of Christianity has conferred upon the Human Race." It is a rhetorical exercise, though a remarkable one, resembling one of those excellent Latin discourses that were crowned in this same Sorbonne but a few years since, in connection with the General Competition between the colleges of Paris. Writing to his brother the Chevalier, on the 30th of July, 1750, Turgot says: "I have had a Latin discourse to make, which I pronounced on the 3d of July with a success most flattering to me. At present I have some four minors a week, with twelve arguments, and on the 27th of November I am to pronounce a second discourse, with which I am even now occupied." And his father, writing to the Chevalier under date of October 23, said: "I have told you of the wonderful success of the Abbé's speech last July; he is to pronounce another on the 27th of next month." The Abbé's success in November was more splendid than in July.

The latter discourse is much more important than the former; it deals with "The Successive Advances of the Human Mind." It is a picture of universal history drawn with great talent, full of reflections surprisingly ripe for a man of his age, marked by great freedom of thought.

written a quarter of a century before the American Declaration of Independence: "Colonies are like fruit, which clings to the tree only until it grows ripe. Becoming self-sufficient, they did what Carthage afterward did, what America will sometime do."

At this time Turgot busied himself much with translations from the Latin, thinking that some of the rules of Greek and Latin versification might advantageously be employed in the French language. He wished to see the alternation of long and short syllables introduced into French poetry, in order to produce upon the delicate and practised ear something of the effect of antique melody. The search for this new prosody was one of Turgot's most constant diversions, to which he returned whenever his engagements permitted it. One of his achievements is a translation of the entire Fourth Book of the *Æneid* into unrhymed French hexameter verses.

He assumed, as a writer of verse, the name of the Abbé de Laage, and sent his verses, under this pseudonym, to Voltaire, requesting his opinion. As one may imagine, Voltaire made no haste to read the efforts of an un-

known abbé. Pressed, however, by renewed letters he finally replied as follows: —

“I have received the letter dated Paris, the 28th of April,¹ and have not received that from Genoa. I am full of regard for the Abbé de Laage, and thank him for his kind remembrance. But being an old man harassed by disease and almost completely blind, I am hardly in a condition to enter upon literary discussions. All that I can say is that I have been extremely well pleased with what I have read, it being the only spirited prose version I have seen.”

The pretended Abbé de Laage was much mortified that the great poet should have taken his verses for prose, and wrote to his intimate friend Caillard that “the man has either disdained to guess, or does not care to express himself;” and passing to a subject in political economy, he adds: “I am no more surprised to see this great poet reason ill about political economy than about physics or natural history; reasoning has never been his strong side.”²

If Turgot had no success in French versification, it was his fortune to compose a Latin

¹ 1770. See Morley's “Voltaire,” p. 335. — TR.

² It is thought best to omit the specimen, which the author here gives, of Turgot's unscannable verses. — TR.

verse which clings to every memory, — the famous verse written by him beneath the portrait of Franklin: —

*"Eripuit cœlo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis."*¹

But the young Abbé de Laulne was not to remain long at the Sorbonne; he did not feel himself called to the priesthood. His friends had wished to retain him, and told him that the name he bore, and his learning, would win him rapid promotion in the Church. He was assured that he would soon become a bishop, and that he might realize in the direction of a diocese some of the noble administrative dreams that already filled his mind.

"My dear friends," he replied, "take for yourselves the advice you give me, since you are able to follow it. For my part, I cannot condemn myself to wear a mask throughout my life." His father, who was very ill, and whose death came three months later, left him free to do as he pleased. He therefore abandoned the Church forever, and left the Sorbonne in the month of December, 1750.

¹ "Lightning from heaven he snatched, and the sceptre from tyrants."

CHAPTER II.

LEAVES THE SORBONNE. — IS APPOINTED MASTER OF REQUESTS. — ASSOCIATES WITH THE PHILOSOPHERS AND THE ECONOMISTS. — WRITES FOR THE "ENCYCLOPÆDIA."

TURGOT was twenty-three years old when he left the Sorbonne. His judgment was formed and his method determined. He sought natural laws, and, in order to reach them, he endeavored to distinguish, in all classes of phenomena, causes from effects, being persuaded that all human errors arise from the confusion which people incessantly make between causes and effects. Thus while still very young he had succeeded, with wonderful accuracy and really incredible swiftness, in unravelling the general causes of all the particular facts that came under his notice. It might almost be said that while still at the Sorbonne his mind contained all that it afterward produced; so that the labor of the last thirty years of his life would be simply to give clear expression to what he had acquired

during the eighteen months passed at that renowned seat of learning.

A consummate philosopher, considering Nature and man from the loftiest standpoints, he had, when scarcely twenty years of age, formed the conception of a history of the human mind and its progress. Of this history he had even sketched the plan, which was one day to be developed in a book. This plan we still possess, and of it some of his later productions are mere partial developments. Thus already, despite his youth, he was admirably equipped for the life-struggle, and his years of apprenticeship had made him one of the men most competent to give helpful expression to new truths, at a time when prejudice seemed to have irresistible potency.

Studying Turgot at the threshold of his active life, and remembering the influence he afterward exerted upon the economic destiny of his country, we naturally ask, "Whose image and superscription does he bear; to what intellectual family does he belong?" Contrary to the rule, we find no answer, for the simple reason that he proceeds from no one. Plainly he is of his century, but by an energy peculiar to himself, and with no guide

place in ours. The strength of his genius was not developed by those who directed his studies, but by his severe and philosophical questioning of his own powers. He was the child of his meditations. He was a born master, as is proved by the fact that those whose disciple he has been called have survived only because of him, and find access to us to-day simply because they force themselves upon us, as it were, in his train.

There is, however, a resemblance to Adam Smith which early becomes well marked. They were of nearly the same age, — Adam Smith was born in 1723. The student at Paris and the student at Edinburgh developed their thoughts separately, for neither knew of the other, and each formed his doctrine by independent reflection. Walking with equal steps upon converging paths, they prepared themselves by the same method for the activities which were to make their names illustrious. Each had been intended for the Church, and each, having completed his theological course, forsook the Church for philosophy; both held the same faith in the progress of the human mind, and both sought its law, at the same time and by the same method, in metaphysics, in moral philosophy, and in political economy. It is therefore not surprising that they became,

Like Turgot, Adam Smith had thought to write the history of civilization and of progress; and like Turgot he had never ceased to study man in his consciousness, in his language, and in his moral, social, economical relations. Later on, they met — this time wittingly — upon philosophical and metaphysical ground. They became apprised of each other's existence, they came to know each other, and we cannot be mistaken in saying that from the day they became acquainted they derived mutual aid and profit from each other's works, and from those of their respective masters. Turgot's philosophy owes much to the Scotch school, to Hutcheson, Adam Smith's master, as well as to Adam Smith himself. But the political economy of Adam Smith owes no less to France, to the Physiocratic¹ economists, and to Turgot.

Quesnay, Gournay, and above all Turgot, exercised a manifest and happy influence upon the author of "The Wealth of Nations." Turgot's little treatise "On the Formation and Distribution of Wealth" preceded by ten years the publication of Adam Smith's great eco-

¹ See the article "Physiocrates" in Lalor's "Cyclopedia of Political Science." — TR.

conomic work; and it was during these ten years that the two thinkers met, became acquainted with each other, and perhaps corresponded upon economic subjects. Condorcet is authority for the statement that there was an active correspondence between them.

Of both it may be said that they are more truly the masters of the nineteenth century than of the eighteenth. In a speech upon the Bank of England, delivered in the house of Commons May 30, 1797, Sir William Pulteney was able to say of Adam Smith that he would persuade the present generation and would govern the next. A similar judgment might have been passed upon Turgot; for although he did not prevail in his own century, he persuaded the enlightened minds of his time, while after his death his ideas governed, and still govern, French society.

On the 5th of January, 1752, Turgot was called to the duties of Deputy-Counsellor of the Attorney-General; on the 30th of December he entered the Parliament of Paris as Counsellor; but his connection with this High Court was merely transitory, or rather he continued to be attached to it only by the looser ties that still united the Masters of Requests to the Parliament. Appointed Master of Requests

1761, when he was sent to Limoges as Intendant; but during the whole period of his intendency (1761 to 1774) he preserved the title and the prerogatives of the Master of Requests, sharing the labors of his colleagues when he thought proper, and sitting with them when he was at Paris.

The functions of the Masters of Requests were both administrative and judicial. They made reports to the Council in presence of the Councillors of State, and sometimes even of the king. They were members of the Parliament, in which, however, they had a right to but four seats. The first four masters who arrived took the places reserved to their body. They shared the jurisdiction of the Royal Council in cases of appeal, and possessed, moreover, a kind of special jurisdiction,—that of the requests of the Hôtel de Ville. It was the Council that heard the review of the trial of Calas, but it was the Chamber of Requests of the Hôtel de Ville—that is, the Masters of Requests alone—that pronounced the judgment. Turgot sat during this trial. “He was one of the judges,” says Dupont de Nemours, “and he spoke on this occasion with a vehemence unusual to him.” Unfortunately his words have not been preserved, as no report

Turgot had been welcomed with open arms by the society of the philosophers, the men of letters, and the economists. His official duties left him much leisure, which he employed to the full in cultivating his mind and in conversation with his friends. It was at Madame Geoffrin's that he made the acquaintance of D'Alembert, of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, of Condorcet, of Helvetius, and of so many others. Madame Helvetius was an older acquaintance. She was Madame de Graffigny's niece, and while still at the Sorbonne he had often seen her as a young girl at her aunt's. Madame de Graffigny, who nicknamed every one, — who called her friend Devaux, Panpan; her friend Desmarets, Morocco; her friend Saint-Lambert, the Little Saint, — never addressed her niece, Mademoiselle de Ligneville, otherwise than by the name of Minette. She loved Minette, she loved the young Abbé de Laulne, as Turgot was then called, and the two young people were warmly attached to each other. Good Abbé Morellet laments that this intimacy did not end in marriage. He was convinced that such a marriage would have secured the happiness of the two young people, and his own into the bargain. Between the two beings whom he best loved, and who returned his affection, he would have passed a

most agreeable me, without being obliged to make pilgrimages from the house of one to the house of the other. "It has always puzzled me," says he, "that no true passion grew out of this intimacy; but whatever the causes of such great reserve, there remained from this union a tender and abiding friendship."

Attempts have been made to convert Morellet's regrets upon this subject into an historical problem, upon which a wealth of erudition has been expended. Many writers have dealt with the question. If Turgot exhibited the reserve with which Morellet seems to reproach him, and if he let slip the opportunity for so well-assorted a match, it was, say some, because he had already taken orders. Such, at least, is the opinion of Delort, author of "The History of the Detention of Philosophers and Men of Letters in the Bastille." But this opinion is based, in the first instance, upon a very doubtful text, and upon many other very contradictory ones. It is certain that Turgot is designated, in some documents of the House of the Sorbonne, as a Parisian deacon; it is no less certain that in others equally authentic he is classed among the simple acolytes. In the first case, he would have taken orders; in the other, he would have remained free. Other writers do not seek so far; they think him too

busy, and find it difficult to imagine him dividing his time between the serious occupations that already filled his life and the thousand cares of family life. Again, — this is a third version, — knowing himself threatened with hereditary gout, and persuaded that he could not expect to live much beyond fifty, Turgot perhaps feared to associate a wife and children with a life so precarious as his. Whatever the reason may be, Turgot never married; he left fair Minette free to marry Helvetius, and remained till death her most devoted friend.

At Quesnay's he met Mirabeau, "the friend of men," Dupont de Nemours, Baudeau, and the economists. There likewise he met Adam Smith, about 1762, when that celebrated writer, not as yet known as a political economist, visited France for the first time with the young Duke of Buccleuch. Morellet says in his *Memoirs*: "M. Turgot, who had a taste for metaphysics, thought highly of the talent of Adam Smith, whom we met several times." Dupont de Nemours also records this meeting, and speaks of Adam Smith, of Turgot, and of himself, as having been "fellow-disciples of Quesnay." Turgot also made the acquaintance of Gournay, of the two Trudaines, of Albert, who was afterward Intendant of Commerce and Lieutenant-General of Police at

Paris, and of many other men of ability, — courageous administrators and defenders of the liberal faith before Councillors of State and the ministers of the day, who were almost all of the school of Colbert.

He had access to the salon of the Marchioness du Deffant, but never was intimate with her. He soon forsook her to follow Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, when the latter, abandoning her protectress, founded a rival salon. Moreover, he had little liking for the friend of the Marchioness, the Duke de Choiseul, who was to become his most formidable adversary. Turgot was already, and not without reason, considered an enemy of the parliaments, although he had in them relatives and personal friends to whom he always remained faithful. In 1754 he accepted a place in a Royal Chamber, — a sort of commission set up after the exile of one of the courts of Parliament, to pass judgment upon cases that came within its jurisdiction, — and this made the breach with the parliamentarians and the Choiseul party definitive. He was, moreover, as we have already noted, by principle a supporter of government, and his respect for the king's authority kept him aloof from all the cabals of opposition.

Madame du Hausset relates in her Memoirs

that, during one day with Quesnay at Paris, she met "a young Master of Requests, handsome of face, who bore the name of some estate that I do not recall [that of Brucourt] but who was the son of Turgot, the Provost of the Merchants. There was much talk of administration, which at first did not amuse me; afterward, the question of the love of the French for their king being raised, M. Turgot said: 'This love is not blind; it is a profound sentiment, a confused recollection of great benefits. The people — I will go further, and say Europe and humanity — owe their freedom to a king of France [I have forgotten the name]; he established the communes and gave civil existence to a vast multitude of men.' I begged M. Quesnay to write down what young Turgot had said, and I showed it to Madame [de Pompadour]. She pronounced in this connection a eulogy upon this Master of Requests, and related the incident to the king, who remarked, 'He comes of good stock.'"

It must be admitted that the economists had an almost excessive tendency to lean upon authority. Some of them would have preferred an honest despot by means of whom they could have realized their system, to a freer government subject to influences upon which it would have been necessary to act separately.

While not going to such a length as this, Turgot was no upholder of what was already termed "the distribution of powers," or "the equilibrium of forces," nor of other combinations devised for the purpose of checking the power of the head of the state. He feared lest obstacles placed in the path of evil might become stumbling-blocks to the right. In order that individual freedom might be protected, he wished the sovereign to exercise what in our day has been styled, often abusively, the rights of the state. But he did not confuse the rights of the state, or of the sovereign, with those which certain philosophers claimed for society. "It has been too constantly the practice of governments," said he, "to sacrifice the happiness of individuals to the alleged rights of society. It is forgotten that society is made for individuals." He considered all unnecessary authority as tyranny; but he never had any clear notion of what to-day goes by the name of political guaranties. He was too prone to think that the deliberative powers of certain local assemblies, and the wide publicity given to their deliberations in the form of votes, might supply the place of political liberties, and might suffice to guarantee the rights of

laborator upon the "Encyclopædia," and made the personal acquaintance of Voltaire. It was in 1760 that he made his pilgrimage to the *Délices*. "You will soon have another visitor," writes D'Alembert to Voltaire, "of whom I will tell you beforehand. This is M. Turgot, a man full of philosophy, of enlightenment, of knowledge, and very much my friend, who wishes to visit you *as a matter of adventure*. I say *adventure* because, 'for fear of the Jews,' he must not boast of it too much—nor you either."

After having received Turgot's visit, Voltaire replied: "I am still full of M. Turgot. I did not know that he was the author of the article on 'Existence;' I have seldom seen a more amiable or a better informed man; and, what is rare for a metaphysician, he has the finest and surest taste."

Although Turgot was completely fascinated by Voltaire, his passion was not blind, and it suffered some eclipses: first, when Voltaire took for prose the metrical experiments of the Abbé de Laage; again, later, when the patriarch of Ferney published his witty diatribe against the single tax on land, under the title of "The Man with the Forty Crowns." On Voltaire's side there was greater constancy; he felt, as a personal misfortune, the dismissal

but to die," he writes to La Harpe, "now that M. Turgot is gone. How they can have dismissed him is more than I can conceive. It has fallen like a thunderbolt on my brain and my heart alike."

In 1778, two years later, when Voltaire returned to Paris, where he was received like a conqueror, he desired to see Turgot. "We were witnesses in 1778," says Condorcet, "to the enthusiasm mingled with deep and tender veneration, which the name and the sight of M. Turgot aroused in that illustrious old man. We saw him, in the midst of the public acclamations, bending beneath the weight of the garlands showered upon him by the nation, hasten with tottering step to M. Turgot, seize his hands in spite of him, cover them with tears and kisses, crying, in a voice choked with sobs: 'Let me kiss the hand that signed the salvation of the people.'"

In 1755 Turgot wrote for the "Encyclopædia" five articles, which appeared in the following year: Etymology, Existence, Expansibility, Fairs and Markets, Foundations. He had formed the plan of contributing other articles, as, Mendicity, Inspectors, Hospital, Immateriality; but when authorization was withdrawn from this publication of the philosophers, he

deemed further collaboration inconsistent with his capacity as a magistrate.

The publication of the article "Existence" was a genuine literary and philosophical event. Men of letters and encyclopedists were struck with the clearness and precision of the style, with the depth and novelty of the thoughts. A writer, a philosopher, seemed to be revealed. To this day a like impression is made upon those who read this remarkable essay for the first time. Victor Cousin greatly admired it, and has assigned to it a place apart in the philosophical literature of the eighteenth century.

"As a metaphysician," says Cousin, "Turgot belongs to the school of Locke, like all the men of his century, even Hutcheson and Smith, with whom he has so much in common; but, like them, it has been given him to escape all the vices of that school, thanks to the breadth and insight of his mind, thanks especially to the nobility of his character and sentiments. In a letter to Condorcet concerning the book 'Of Mind,' he metes justice to the absurd and gloomy ethics of Helvetius. . . . But the best remaining trace of his metaphysics is the article on 'Existence.' "

CHAPTER III.

QUESNAY AND GOURNAY. — THE PHYSIOCRATS.

— TURGOT'S ECONOMIC DOCTRINE. — ESSAY
ON THE FORMATION AND DISTRIBUTION OF
WEALTH. — EULOGY OF GOURNAY.

TURGOT did not separate economic laws from other moral laws, and he pursued the study of them all simultaneously, with equal enthusiasm. To him, men formed a natural society, and he thought them unable to attain the degree of prosperity of which they are capable, except under conditions which they cannot possibly throw off. These conditions form laws which are unlike positive laws; which do not, like the latter, find a sanction in pecuniary or corporal penalties; but which cannot be transgressed without real injury. If man disobeys or seeks to evade these laws, he places a stumbling-block in his own path and fails to realize the degree of wealth or comfort that he might otherwise

formed by Turgot of the relations between natural law and political economy.

Quesnay was then at the height of his fame; he had published his *Maxims* and his "Economic Table." His disciples were a brotherhood of the initiated who treated the master as a kind of god. They called themselves the "Economists," and formed, in reality, a sect. Turgot did not like the spirit of sect. One of his letters on the freedom of the grain trade contains this passage: "I know very well that those who have for some time been speaking or writing against free trade in grain, affect to regard this opinion as merely that of a few writers who have styled themselves Economists, and who have contrived to arouse a certain public prejudice against themselves by the sectarian attitude into which they have blundered, and by a fanatical tone that always repels those who do not share it."

Although professing the sincerest admiration for Quesnay, Turgot preferred the companionship of Gournay. Gournay, his second and perhaps more beloved master, had, it is true, adopted the ideas of Quesnay; but he labored in another field of that domain with which they had together enriched the world. Dupont de Nemours takes great pains to prove the identicalness of the views of these two remarkable

To his mind, Gournay was as much a physiocrat as Quesnay.

Quesnay's chief postulate was that agriculture should be brought to the highest possible degree of perfection. He considered all other industries as dependent upon the tillage of the soil; and if he demanded freedom for manufactures and trade, it was because freedom of trade, by facilitating the exchange and working up of the raw products of the soil, would assure to agriculture the means of further development. "Poor peasants," said he, "poor kingdom; poor kingdom, poor sovereign."

Gournay, while recognizing the principle that the promotion of agriculture should be the chief care of the statesman, devoted himself more especially to the solution of the economical problems of manufacturing industry and trade. He noted that competition is the most effective spur to labor, and that every man knows better than the government what is most favorable to his own interest. He took as his motto the words: "Let alone, let pass."¹ The ideas peculiar to Gournay, as developed

¹ "*Laissez faire, laissez passer.*"

and applied by Turgot, have become the modern political economy, — the political economy of Adam Smith and of Jean Baptiste Say.

Turgot's economic doctrine is summed up in two of his essays. The first is a study of Gournay sent in 1752 to Marmontel, to aid the latter in composing the eulogy of their common friend. The second, entitled "An Essay on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth," is an outline of political economy for the benefit of two young Chinese students who were about to return to their Oriental home.

The reflections on the formation and distribution of wealth form an opusculé of one hundred paragraphs. The first seven are devoted to the principle that tillage of the soil is the only source of wealth. This is the pure doctrine of Quesnay. All things useful to man are products of the earth. The processes of manufacture, the fetching and carrying of commerce, are operations that add no new product to those that have sprung from the cultivated soil. Agriculture is the only form of industry that increases the wealth of a nation. The soil immediately gives the cultivator the reward of his labor, and what it gives is worth more than the pains he has taken. This is a physical result of the fertility of the soil, — a result always in excess of the

been brought about. The excess, over and above the wages of his labor, that Nature thus bestows as a mere gift upon the cultivator, enables him to purchase the labor of other members of society, who earn simply so much as is necessary for their support. The farmer who owns his land, and whose superfluity gives work to others, is therefore, according to Turgot, the sole producer of wealth, which by its circulation animates all the industries of society.

Society is thus divided into two industrial classes: the first, drawing from the soil wealth that is continually being renewed; the second, occupied in working up the raw product, and receiving in exchange for its labor a mere subsistence. The first may be called the productive class, the second the wage-earning class.

After this preamble, Turgot enumerates in the following paragraphs the different ways of turning the soil to account, and endeavors to prove by new arguments what he has already set forth; namely, that the soil alone can furnish a net product, — that is, something in excess of the expenses of cultivation and of interest on the capital invested.

The following paragraphs, up to the fifty-

first, deal with the questions of capital, of coinage, of trade, and of the circulation of money. Before gold and silver had become the pledge representing every kind of wealth, exchanges, according to Turgot, were made in kind. Measures of wheat were given in exchange for measures of wine. The competition between those who had more or less need of a given commodity determined the current value of each commodity relatively to all the rest. Any commodity could thus become the equivalent of any other, and could be used as a common measure for comparing other commodities. A given quantity of wheat worth eighteen pints of wine would likewise buy a sheep, or a piece of tanned leather, or a certain quantity of iron; thus all these things had in trade the same value. But not all pints of wine are of the same value; and if eighteen pints of Anjou wine will buy a sheep, eighteen pints of Cape wine will buy several sheep. In order to avoid the confusion resulting from the application of the same term to things of variable qualities, it was found necessary to choose, as a measure of the value of other commodities, a commodity always identical, easy to transport, and capable of being preserved without alteration. Gold and silver unite to a superior degree all these qualities,

and by the nature of things they have become the universal form of money.

The last fifty paragraphs of the work deal with the accumulation of capital and with the various modes of employing it, as in purchasing a landed estate, in carrying on an agricultural enterprise, in industrial or commercial pursuits, or, finally, in making loans, in consideration of interest, to those in need of funds. In analyzing these five ways of investing capital, Turgot points out and proves that capital is always prerequisite to any undertaking, whatever its nature. Agricultural enterprises can no more dispense with it than others. Hence he concludes that agriculture, like manufacturing, has its masters and its workmen, — the masters furnishing the capital, the workmen the labor. The mere farm-laborer, like the mere operative, has no property but his muscles, and no profit but his wages. Without capital there can be no large farms, and large farms are necessary to progress; for, except by culture on a large scale, the soil cannot produce all that it is capable of producing. Thus the tillage of the soil and industries of all kinds depend upon a mass of capital, — that is, accumulated personal property, — which returns every year into the hands of those to

following year in order to permit the same enterprises to continue.

Returning at the end to the theory dear to Quesnay, Turgot concludes that the product of capital should be exempted from all contribution to the public expenses, because it is a product previously deducted from that of the soil. The revenue of landholders can alone be considered free, because it is available, and only available wealth can be employed for the expenses of the state.

Such is Turgot's famous little work. On the subjects of capital, money, competition, it set forth truths as useful as they were novel. It was necessarily and constantly present to the mind of Adam Smith nine years later, when he wrote his "Wealth of Nations."

But one is forced to admit that while it is full of truths it abounds also in errors, being saturated with Quesnay's doctrine of the net product, and constantly affirming that the soil must be considered the only source of wealth. While regretting the errors that led Turgot astray, one cannot help honoring him, as well as the other physiocrats. They should be honored even for their errors, because these are due to a false application of laws eternally true,—laws of which Quesnay is the discoverer. The false application made of these

laws by Turgot has given them such celebrity that they have been recognized and accepted as true by all thinkers.

The physiocrats affirmed in the first place that there is a natural law of the formation of wealth, and that, in order to permit this law to produce all its effects and to enable men to acquire wealth, three kinds of freedom are essential: First, men united into communities and organized into nations must be left free to produce; secondly, they must be left free to buy, sell, and transport the products of agriculture, of manufactures, and of trade; finally, they must be left free to accumulate, to circulate, to lend capital, and to employ it for the development of the general wealth. This is the most important of the truths discovered by the physiocrats.

Another of the truths they taught is, that taxes are subject to a natural law of incidence. The state can compel a class of citizens to pay taxes, but it cannot prevent them from obtaining reimbursement from others in case the natural economic law permits or commands it. The physiocrats proved conclusively that the

make to the real debtors of the state advances recoverable with more or less delay and difficulty. From this observation it was concluded that such repercussive taxes should not be imposed upon men whose sole reliance is the labor of their hands, for this would be compelling the poor to advance money to the well-to-do. Thence also they deduced the equally evident principle that taxes should, as far as possible, be assessed upon the fortune and the income of those who are bound finally to pay them.

But with these great truths discovered by Quesnay and so ably expounded by Turgot, how much error is mingled! Is it possible to believe with them that the soil is the only source of wealth, of "continually renewing wealth," to use Turgot's own expression? We know to-day that all forms of capital indistinguishably, whatever be their method of investment or the use made of them, — provided this investment and this use be productive, — have, like the soil, the power of constantly giving birth to new wealth. Of this principle Adam Smith and Jean Baptiste Say have given proofs that have closed the debate.

Equally contrary to truth is that theory of taxation which recognizes no legitimate resource for the budget of public expenditure

except what can be drawn from the net product of the nation, as if the state could defray its annual expenses only by means of the new wealth annually created! Were this a well-founded opinion, a stationary people—that is, a nation whose wealth had ceased to grow, and which lived simply by means of labor paid by former accumulations of capital—would have no right to require its citizens to contribute to the public fund. No one can deny, however, that whatever the wealth a nation may have gained, or to whatever depth of poverty it may have fallen, it is always obliged to provide for certain common services, and—come what may—to convert a portion of its private expenditures into public expenditure.

The truth is, that the tax should involve an increase of effort or a diminution of enjoyment on the part of all; and that the annual savings of the people may contribute to the expenditure, but should not constitute the sole fund, nor even the principal fund of budgetary resources.

Turgot's theory involves another error. He not only thinks that the treasury can be supplied from the net product of the nation alone, but he holds that there is no net product in the nation save that of the landholders. Hence he concludes that capitalists, manufac-

turers, tradesfolk, should be exempted from all taxation, their part being paid by the landholders, who reimburse themselves by selling to the others at a higher price the materials for their trade or their industry. In a letter to Turgot written in 1766, and preserved in the archives of Lantheuil Castle, David Hume clearly states and forcibly refutes this erroneous doctrine. In the first part of the letter Hume tells his friend with great minuteness the incidents of his quarrel with J. J. Rousseau: —

“But, as you may well believe, I am sick of this subject, and I now take leave of it, I hope forever. Although my letter must have fatigued you already, I am tempted to say a word upon the political question that has often been raised between us, — I mean the proper method of levying taxes. Should they be levied upon real estate, or upon commodities? You will admit that, as the public resources must be employed for the defence of the entire community, it is more equitable to draw them from all; but you contend that this is impracticable, that the burden will finally fall upon the land, and that it is better to assess the land directly. You suppose, then, that laborers always demand for their labor a price proportional to the taxation? But this is contrary to experience. Manual labor is dearer at Neuchâtel, and in other parts of Switzerland where there are no taxes, than in the neighboring provinces of France where there are many. In the English colo-

nies there are next to no taxes, and manual labor is three times as dear there as in any European country. In Holland there are heavy taxes upon commodities, and the Republic possesses no land upon which they can fall. The price of manual labor invariably depends upon the quantity of labor and upon the amount of demand for work, and not upon the taxes. The dealers who manufacture cloth for export cannot raise the wages of their operatives, because this would make their cloth too dear to be sold in the foreign market ; nor can those who supply the home market raise the wages, for there are never two prices for the same kind of manual labor. This is true of all products of which any quantity is exported,—that is, of all products ; and even were there a product of which no quantity was exported, the wages of the operatives could not be raised, for the rise in wages would attract so many laborers into that industry, that a fall in the price of labor would immediately result. It seems to me that when a tax is levied upon a commodity, laborers either consume less or work more. A man acquires no more productive power, but he can add some hours to his week's work. Seldom is he so poor as not to be able to cut off something from his expenditure. What happens when the price of grain rises? Has not the poor man to live more scantily and to work harder? A tax produces the same effect. I beg you also to consider that besides the landowners and the poor laborers, there are always a consider-

tal in trade, and who spend a large income in giving work to the poor. I am convinced that in France and in England incomes of this kind are much greater than those derived from the soil. For besides merchants properly so called, I include in this class all shopkeepers and all master tradesmen of every description, and I deem it very just that these should contribute toward the public expenses; this, however, cannot take place unless taxes are levied upon commodities. It seems to me unreasonable to say that this order of citizens necessarily throws its proportion of the taxes back upon the landowners, since its revenues and gains are certainly able to bear some reduction.”¹

This excellent lesson in political economy was given Turgot a year before he produced his “Essay on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth,” and nine years before Adam Smith’s “Wealth of Nations.” Turgot’s reply, dated March 25, 1767, has been preserved by Hill Burton. Turgot admits that the price of labor is determined by the law of supply and demand. “You observe truly,” said he, “that it is not the degree of taxation that determines the rate of wages, but merely the relation of the supply to the demand. This principle has never been

¹ This letter is not to be found in the collections of Hume’s correspondence, and is here perforce translated from the French. — TR.

denied: it is the one principle that immediately fixes the price of all things that have a commercial value." And in order to explain the apparent contradiction between this and Quesnay's doctrine, Turgot distinguishes two prices,—"the current price, determined by the relations of supply and demand; and the fundamental price, which, for a commodity, is what the object costs the workman." In this distinction Turgot found an answer to his detractors, who accused him, and still accuse him, of condemning the workman to eternal poverty by the iron law of wages.

With Quesnay, Turgot divided mankind into two classes: the producing and the wage-earning,—the productive and the sterile. The workman cannot co-operate in the formation of a net product, and his wages assure him nothing beyond the strict necessities of life. "In all kinds of labor," said Turgot, "it must and does happen that the wages of the workman are restricted to what is necessary for his subsistence."

Louis Blanc takes ground against this theory. "Turgot," he says, "had the misfortune to adopt the principle from which has been derived in our day that base and cruel formula: 'Every man for himself and every man in his own house.' This principle once

admitted, what if the consequences are fatal? 'This must be so.' Certainly, it 'must' happen that the workman is reduced to the strict necessities of life, when individual right has been taken as the point of departure; but would this be so in a system of fraternal association?"

The germ of Turgot's defence is found in his letter of March 25, 1767. The "iron law," he would have answered, determines the fundamental price of labor; the law of supply and demand determines its current price. "Although the fundamental price is not," said he, "the immediate principle of the current value, it is nevertheless a minimum below which the current value cannot sink: for if a dealer loses on his merchandise, he ceases to sell or to manufacture; and if a workman cannot live by his labor, he becomes a beggar or an emigrant. Moreover, the workman must find a certain profit in order to provide against accident, and to bring up his family. . . . As you say, the workman contrives to labor more or to consume less, but this can be only for a short time. Doubtless no man works as much as he might work. Nor is it in nature that men should work as much as they might, any more than that a cord should be strung as tensely as it might be. In every machine a certain de-

gree of slackening is necessary, without which it would run the risk of breaking down at any moment. . . . This species of superfluity upon which, when worst comes to worst, one can fall back, is another essential element in the ordinary subsistence of workmen and of their families."

Turgot deemed the English hardly fitted to understand Quesnay. "Our economic philosophers," he wrote to Hume on the 23d of July, 1766, "zealous for their master, will stoutly uphold Quesnay's system. This system is now very remote from the minds of English writers; in fact, the difficulty of harmonizing its principles with the ambition of monopolizing the world's commerce is too great to permit the hope of their adopting it for a long time to come."

He was not converted by his friend's letters; his mind was made up, — he was a physiocrat, and a physiocrat he remained. David Hume could not but lament this; for with all his liking for Turgot, he did not like the sect of the economists, — witness this sally in a letter to the Abbé Morellet (May 15, 1769):¹ —

"I see that in your prospectus [of a new Diction-

economists by any declaration of your sentiments ; in which I commend your prudence. But I hope that in your work you will thunder them, and crush them, and pound them, and reduce them to dust and ashes ! They are, indeed, the set of men the most chimerical and most arrogant that now exist, since the annihilation of the Sorbonne. I ask your pardon for saying so, as I know you belong to that venerable body. I wonder what could engage our friend, M. Turgot, to herd among them, — I mean among the economists ; though I believe he was also a Sorbonnist."

Turgot always remained faithful to Quesnay's doctrine, always affirming it with deep conviction. One may even say that he made it his own by the strength with which he set it forth. It is not, however, to be forgotten that he did not belong to the inner sanctuary ; that he would himself have protested more loudly than any one else had he been taken for the official interpreter of the master ; and that he recoiled from attributing to Quesnay's maxims that dogmatic value with which the sectaries of every age have invested the ideas of their founder.

Outside of this school of economists he had

familiar intimacy. The "Essay on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth" is not, therefore, sufficient to give us a full understanding of Turgot's doctrine, the development of which must be sought in the conversations with Gournay. But this does not imply that, in consequence of his studies with Gournay, Turgot modified the fundamental ideas he had derived from Quesnay touching the function of the soil in the production of wealth, nor that he recognized that he had previously fallen into any errors.

The "Essay on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth" is posterior to Gournay's death; yet the theories of free labor, free trade, and free industry, which really made up the whole of Gournay's system, have received such illustration from Turgot's application of them and from his admirable tests exhibiting the happy results that might flow from them, as to have overshadowed the errors of the net product and of the exclusive predominance of the land over personal capital. The net product which was to furnish a basis for taxation, the theory which sees in the soil the only source of wealth, have become mere hypotheses explaining the great law of the natural incidence of taxes, and illustrating the incontestable maxims that no state is rich whose people are

poor, and that no state can grow rich by ruining its tax-payers. Considering certain economic prolegomena as hypotheses, we may say that Quesnay's theories have been as useful to the progress of economic science as other now abandoned hypotheses touching the emission of light and the nature of electricity have been to the progress of physical science. Like the most eminent men of his time, Turgot made use of these hypotheses; it was, however, not these, but his assertion of the freedom of labor and of trade, his establishment of the doctrine of free labor upon imperishable foundations, that made him Adam Smith's precursor, perhaps his master, and that give Turgot a claim to be considered the real head of the modern economic school.

Gournay, whose real name was Vincent, was born in 1712, at Saint-Malo. At the age of seventeen he was sent by his parents to Cadiz, to learn trade; he succeeded. In 1744 his business brought him to France, and into relations with Maurepas, who perceived his merit. Two years later his partner left him a fortune, and with it the estate of Gournay, whose name he thenceforward bore. He had visited and studied in detail England and Holland, and he read with great eagerness books dealing with the science of trade. From the

treatises of Josias Child and the memoirs of John De Witt he drew the first elements of his economic knowledge. In 1748 he withdrew from business and removed to Paris. M. de Maurepas urged him to seek the position of Intendant of Trade, and in 1751 helped him to obtain it. It is at this time that he comes into relations with the economists.

Dupont de Nemours, who lays great stress upon the unity of the economic school, tells us that Gournay and Quesnay arrived from different sides at the same results; and that they met at the goal with mutual congratulations upon the exactness with which their diverse but equally true principles led to identical conclusions. He admits, however, that the two standpoints from which they viewed "the principles of political administration" had formed two schools. The principal members of Quesnay's school are the Marquis de Mirabeau, Abcille, Fourqueux, Bertin, Dupont de Nemours, the Abbé Roubaud, and Le Trosne. Mercier de La Rivière and the Abbé Baudeau form, says Dupont de Nemours, a special branch of this school. They believed that it would be easier to persuade a prince than a nation, and that freedom of trade and labor, as well as the true principles of taxation, would be sooner established by the authority of sov-

ereigns than by the progress of reason. Although these views were not shared by all the economists, there were many who slipped upon this treacherous ground; and, as we have seen, Turgot has been reproached not altogether unjustly with having attached too little importance to the political liberties of a nation.

The other school is that of Gournay: it comprised Malesherbes, the Abbé Morellet, Trudaine de Montigny, Cardinal de Boisgelin, the Abbé de Cicé, — in general, the particular friends of Turgot, and Turgot himself. It was while Gournay was Intendant of Trade that his relations with Turgot were most intimate. Condorcet, speaking of their interviews, says: "They were of great benefit to M. Turgot, who learned from M. de Gournay to recognize in detail all the advantages of free trade and all the disadvantages of prohibitions." From 1753 to 1756 Gournay made a series of official tours in the provinces in order to judge for himself of the state of trade and manufactures. Taking Turgot with him, he visited successively Burgundy, Lyonnais, Dauphiné, Provence, Upper and Lower Languedoc; and, later on, Maine, Anjou, and Brittany.

On his return from the journey of 1756 he fell sick, languished some years, and died

June 27, 1759. Marmontel thought of writing his eulogy, and asked Turgot for notes. Some days later Marmontel received from Turgot a paper containing a very clear and faithful exposition of Gournay's doctrines. This paper, which was published by Dupont de Nemours under the title, "Eulogy of Gournay," supplements the "Essay on the Formation and Distribution of Wealth," and constitutes with that essay the doctrinal portion of Turgot's works.

Gournay thought that it did not belong to government to regulate the market price of commodities, or to prohibit one kind of industry in order to cause another to flourish. For a century past, said he, all educated men in Holland and in England have regarded the abuses still existing in France as relics of barbarism, — as the mark of the ignorance and weakness of those who have hitherto governed France without recognizing the importance of freedom, or, recognizing it, without being able to protect it against the spirit of monopoly. Universal freedom to buy and to sell appeared to him the only way of assuring to the vender a selling price high enough to encourage production, and to the consumer the lowest possi-

consumers dupes, but thought it the business of the individual to be watchful; saying that we do not furnish all children with padded caps for fear lest some of them may fall and bump their heads.

In the three following propositions Turgot sums up and appropriates Gournay's doctrine:

First, "To give back to all branches of trade that precious freedom of which they have been deprived by centuries of ignorant prejudice, by the facility of government in lending itself to private interests, and by the desire of a misconceived perfection;" *secondly*, "To facilitate the labor of all citizens in order to arouse the greatest competition in sale, whence will necessarily result the greatest perfection in the making and the most advantageous price for the buyer;" *thirdly*, "To give the buyer the greatest possible number of competitors by opening to the seller every outlet for his commodity,—this being the only means of assuring to labor its recompense, and of perpetuating production, which has no object but this recompense."

Such was Gournay's system as adopted and interpreted by Turgot,—a system resting upon the maxim that "every man knows his own interest better than another to whom that interest is entirely foreign." Those who opposed Gour-

may's opinions represented him as the enthusiast of a system. "This reproach, 'a man with a system,' has become," says Turgot, "a sort of weapon in the hands of the prejudiced, or of persons interested in maintaining abuses, against those proposing any kind of change whatever."

CHAPTER IV.

- I. INTENDANT OF LIMOGES. — THE CADASTRE.
— II. LOANS OF MONEY, AND USURY. — III.
LETTERS ON FREE TRADE IN GRAIN.

I.

FOR two years after Gournay's death Turgot continued to perform his functions as Master of Requests; but, with a view to preparing himself for an intendancy, he asked permission of M. de La Michodière to accompany him in his tours of inspection.

France was divided into forty provinces, and into thirty-five revenue districts called generalities. The province was a military division commanded by a governor; the generality was an administrative circumscription presided over by an intendant. The province did not coincide, either in extent or in boundaries, with the generality. There were almost always several governors to every intendant, and several

fects, they had charge of the police, of public charity, and of the militia. Their powers were the more considerable from the fact that they stood in constant relations with the Council of State, and that, preserving the title of Master of Requests, they sat during their frequent sojourns at Paris with the other masters of requests.

On the 8th of August, 1761, Turgot was appointed Intendant of Limoges. Writing to Voltaire on the 24th of the same month, he says: "It is to Limoges that I am sent. I should have much preferred Grenoble, whence I could have made little pilgrimages to the shrine of Confucius in order to learn of the High Priest." The Generality of Limoges was divided into five sub-districts called elections; namely, Brive, Tulle, Limoges, Bourgneuf, Angoulême. The country was poor and tax-ridden. "I think myself within bounds in affirming," says Turgot, "that the taxes of the Generality of Limoges amount to forty-eight or fifty per cent of the total product, and that the king derives about as much from the land as the proprietors."

For thirteen years Turgot devoted himself

with unslackening zeal to the interests of his generality; but he could not satisfy everybody. When, in 1774, he was called to the Ministry, some said that he was worshipped in Limousin, others that he was detested there. Probably both classes were right. The Limousin nobility had been accustomed to make use of the intendant to obtain favors, to reduce the *taille*¹ and the poll-tax of its dependents, and to cut down its own twentieths to the lowest figure. The nobles did not pardon Turgot for breaking with such easy customs, and affected to treat him, like Gournay, as a doctrinaire. "Yes, madame, he is a man with a system," exclaims Abbé Baudeau, writing to a lady whom he does not mention, but whom he describes as a witty court prude and a mother in the Jesuitical Church. ". . . What! think you that incoherent ideas strung together with red tape suffice for the governing of a kingdom like France?" Turgot had therefore made many enemies among the petty nobility of the country. But not so among the peasantry. His departure was announced from the pulpit by all the parish priests of the province, who everywhere said mass for him. The peasants left their work to attend

¹ The tallage or tax levied upon all who did not belong to the nobility or clergy. — TR.

this service, saying to one another, "The king does well to take M. Turgot, but we are very unlucky to lose him."

We cannot write the history of his administration, nor make a complete analysis of what he called his Limousin labors; this would involve an extended work full of details now devoid of interest. But in order fully to understand Turgot's genius, it is necessary to study the unfailing breadth of view which he brought to the treatment of administrative problems. No piece of business was too insignificant to afford an occasion for laying down principles. His circulars to his subordinates, his letters to the minister, his advices to the Council, are so many essays upon economic laws and theories. Such are his "Advice Concerning the Levy and Distribution of the *Taille*" (1762 to 1770), his "Memorial on Interest-bearing Loans and on Usury" (1769), his "Letters on Free Trade in Grain" (1770). And, surprising enough, all that he writes seems improvised! He has no need of protracted study to enable him to trace effects to their causes; his early education, his mental habits, his accuracy of judgment, enable him to penetrate immediately, without hesitation or confusion, to the bottom of every subject. Not that he was satisfied with a first

glance, or neglected details, or was not laborious; on the contrary, he was a prodigious toiler, and his frequent attacks of gout never took him from his business.

His only rest was the writing of private letters, and he had many correspondents. With Caillard he talked poetry, sending him translations of Horace or of Pope, and employing him to forward to Ferney, under the veil of an assumed name, those metrical verses that Voltaire took for prose. He reasoned about the pronunciation of the ancients, and could not pardon David Hume for thinking that the ancient Romans pronounced Latin in the English fashion. With Condorcet he exchanged opinions upon philosophy, ethics, science. Never was his mind so free as when it was most occupied.

Meantime the interests of those under his jurisdiction were his constant solicitude. One of his most engrossing tasks during the first years of his intendancy was the revision of the tax-rolls. In Limousin the *taille* was at that time levied in accordance with a scale drawn up twenty years before by M. de Tourny, the former intendant. Wishing to correct the abuses of the arbitrary *taille*, Tourny had conceived the plan of recasting all the old valuations of the products of the land, and of

founding upon a sort of cadastre an equitable scale of assessment. But the surveys had been finished only throughout some two thirds of the Province, and the valuations had been based, for the most part, upon a mere inspection of premises or a bird's-eye view of sections of cultivated land. There had resulted such shocking inequalities that the people had found no relief in the abandonment of the arbitrary *taille*. Turgot found it necessary to do the work all over again.

What he had in view was a real cadastre, — a methodical, geometrical description of the Province, estate by estate, — which could be kept abreast of successive changes in the composition and nature of each piece of property. But the establishment of a cadastre with surveys and valuations has always been, and will always be, a very long, difficult, and costly work. "Had I then known," writes Turgot in 1762 to the Comptroller-General, "the vastness of the labor necessary, not merely to perfect the future working of the system, but to draw it from its present confusion, I should perhaps not have had courage to undertake the task."

He did not, however, spare his pains. He made every effort to instruct the commissioners, the proprietors, the peasants, touching all questions raised by the tax-revision. With a

view to public education, he caused the Limoges Agricultural Society to offer a prize for an essay on the theory of taxation; and in order to overthrow administrative prejudices, he continually broached in his letters and reports to the Council and to the Comptroller-General — no matter how small the immediate question at issue — the most general topics, even that of the principle of taxation.

According to Turgot the land-tax should be fixed and real. It should be fixed: "It is very important to apportion the land-tax according to a fixed valuation." It should be real: that is, "apportioned only upon the basis of the real estate of each tax-payer and of the revenue he derives from it." A tax upon individuals is, Turgot thinks, a manifest absurdity, since the individual is nothing but "a bundle of wants."

In his "Plan of a Memoir on Taxation," Turgot examines the comparative merits of the quota system and of the apportionment system. The state may ask of each individual a portion of his revenue, — this is the quota system; or the state may content itself with asking of the nation, of each province, of each community, a lump sum to be assessed proportionally upon the proprietors, — this is the apportionment system. Turgot sees great

advantages in the quota system. Collecting a proportional part of the revenue, the state would be, in his opinion, the real proprietor of that part of the revenue. Bargains would be arranged upon this understanding. It would finally come about that purchasers would not purchase the state's part, so that in the end no one would pay any more taxes. The public revenue, being a quota of the national wealth, would increase with it. "The king's wealth would be the gauge of the people's wealth, and the administration, always smitten by the counter-stroke of its own errors, would learn wisdom from continual experience, by the mere calculation of the product of the tax."

Notwithstanding all these advantages, the quota system appears to him impossible; because here the government is alone against all, and every man is interested in concealing the value of his property, while no one is interested in establishing the truth. He adds a consideration which has lost none of its force, — for the general method of cultivating land has changed much less in France within one hundred and twenty years than many imagine. It is, that while in districts where agriculture is pursued on a great scale the value of rentals gives a control of the revenue from land, this kind of control does not exist in districts where

farming is carried on upon shares, — that is, where there are no leases. And he adds that it is far from true that all the land is rented: “ Scarcely a third of the kingdom is cultivated by tenant-farmers.”

As to trusting to the honesty of declarants, he deems this an impracticable method of collecting the tax; and he ends with this not very consoling but very penetrating observation: “ Fraud would become very common, and would *cease, from that time, to be dishonest.*” He therefore advises the state to adhere to the apportionment of a fixed amount.

In his opinion, the land-tax must be an apportioned tax levied by means of a permanent cadastre to be established upon the survey and classification of lands according to their quality. This system is none other than that which was established in France by the National Assembly, and which still exists. Its advantages and disadvantages are still those pointed out by Turgot; and the same questions are raised to-day as at the time when the attempt was made to perfect the apportionment in the provinces where apportionment was in force, and to introduce it into those in which the contrary system still prevailed.

II.

In 1769 there occurred at Angoulême one of those commercial crises which we now very improperly call "monetary crises." The cause of this one lay in the inability of speculators to sustain an excessive circulation of accommodation bills. Suspensions of payments, failures, and even bankruptcies resulted; engagements falling due were not renewed, discount became impossible, trade was paralyzed; money was not to be had for any purpose, and the best merchants were absolutely discredited. Local dealers in fabrics had as usual sent their orders to Lyons, and had been answered that no business would be transacted with gentlemen in Angoulême except for ready money.

Since that time many similar crises have been suffered. The excessive circulation of paper always ends in an advance in the price of money, compelling speculators to liquidate, and dragging down along with the guilty ones the imprudent lenders who have confided in them. But the Angoulême crisis of 1769 had a peculiar character that seriously aggravated its consequences.

The authors of the accommodation bills were a parcel of rogues who had connived to

profit by their own bankruptcy, by accusing the lenders of usury and by laying informations against them before the Seneschal of Angoulême. "This disturbance of the operations of trade," says Turgot, "this stoppage of the circulation of money, this alarm among the merchants of a city, this wrecking of their fortunes, is a great evil; but an equal evil is the triumph of a set of knaves who, after imposing upon the credulity of individuals to procure money upon fraudulent bills, have had the criminal cunning to find in misinterpreted laws not only a screen from prosecution, but also a weapon of cruel vengeance, — a means of slandering and ruining their creditors, and of enriching themselves with the spoils." Turgot proposed, therefore, to appeal to the Council the accusations of usury pending before the Seneschal of Angoulême, and to remove the cognizance to a commission, which was also to be intrusted with the duty of drafting a declaration, and of determining the law touching the use of interest-bearing loans in trade.

The Council, accordingly, took cognizance of the appeals; the proceedings against the lenders were annulled, and the institution of

obscure as ever, being left to the arbitrary interpretation of the judges.

In support of his request for an appeal, Turgot, faithful to his habit of treating particular cases with the greatest possible breadth, sent the Council of State a Memorial, which remains the completest and most perfect work ever written upon the question of interest-bearing loans and usury, and which immediately placed its author among our foremost writers.

Dividing his subject into three parts, in the first he establishes the necessity of interest-bearing loans for the exigencies of trade and industry, and proves that the rate is variable in proportion to the abundance or scarcity of capital and to the nature of the risk. In the second part he refutes the arguments of scholastic philosophers, of jurisconsults, and of theologians. In the third part he seeks the historic causes of the hatefulness of usury and of the bad reputation of money-lenders. Finally, in a strong-based conclusion, he prays that interest-bearing loans be legalized, that the rate be left to the free agreement of borrower and lender, and that usurers who prey upon the passions and inexperience of youth be punished only by the laws relating to breach of confidence and other kinds of imposition.

In every commercial centre, according to

Turgot, a majority of the enterprises are based upon borrowed money, and no capitalist will deprive himself of money of which he could make use, without a prospect of some adequate return. If money brought no interest, no one would lend it; if the law forbids interest-bearing loans, either the law will be violated or trade will be crippled. But if interest-bearing loans are necessary, and if money is an article of commerce, money must be regarded as actual merchandise, the price of which depends upon the agreement of the parties, and is subject, like all other merchandise, to the law of supply and demand. What fault is to be found with the borrower for consenting to pay a high rate of interest to the lender who takes a risk on his behalf, or with the lender who secures himself from risk by an increase of price? No law, either civil or religious, obliges a person to furnish another gratuitous assistance; why should the civil or the religious law forbid the procurement of money at the price which the borrower finds it to his advantage to pay? The lawfulness of interest is an immediate consequence of the right of ownership. The owner of a thing may sell it or lend it, the rate of the sale or loan being always just, when the will of both parties is free, and when there is no fraud on either side. These principles are

admitted by every one touching everything but money; why should they not be applicable to money, as to everything else? If it be said that it is need which constrains the borrower to submit to the lender's conditions, may it not be replied that it is also need which compels a man to buy bread of the baker? Has the baker on this account any the less right to receive the price of his bread; and may the buyer, on the score of need, take possession of the bread without payment?

In their attack upon interest-bearing loans, the scholastic philosophers started from an argument which is said to be in Aristotle; and, on the pretext that money does not produce money, they concluded that it was wrong to make loans produce interest. The pretended barrenness of money is a palpable error, based upon a wretched juggle with words. The holders and spreaders of this doctrine forget that money is the necessary instrument of all agricultural, industrial, and commercial undertakings; and that, although called barren, it is throughout the world the equivalent not only

quires," says Pothier, "that in a contract which is not gratuitous the values given on both sides shall be equal; so that neither party shall give more than he receives, or receive more than he gives. Now, all that the lender exacts beyond the principal of his loan is something over and above what he has given; since in receiving the mere principal he receives the exact equivalent of what he has given."

Pothier's argument was also advanced by Saint Thomas Aquinas. The fungibles forming the material of a loan have no use distinguishable from the thing itself; to sell this use in consideration of interest is to sell something that does not exist. Turgot considers this reasoning to be a tissue of demonstrable errors and verbal jugglery. In any agreement resting upon mutual conditions there can be no injustice done except by violence, fraud, bad faith, or breach of confidence. Between values exchanged, or between articles given and received, there is no such thing as metaphysical equality or inequality. Equality of value depends upon the opinion of the contracting parties touching the degree of utility of the

the principal, gives back more than he received; and they infer that this is unjust. Such reasoning takes it for granted that the money received to-day, and the money which is to be returned in a year, are two things perfectly equal. Is there not, on the contrary, an obvious difference between the two values, — so obvious as to be recognized by the vulgar proverb, “A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush”?

The final argument against the lawfulness of interest-bearing loans is drawn from Holy Writ. We read in the Gospel of Saint Luke: “Lend, hoping for nothing again.”¹ Sensible men would have seen in these words merely a precept of charity, and, placing them in their context, it would be impossible to interpret them otherwise: “But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil.” According to Turgot, any man reading this text without prejudice will see in it a mere precept of charity. The true sense of the passage is as if it had been said: “As men, as Christians, you are all brothers and friends; help one

¹ In the revised version of 1881: “Lend, never despairing,” or, “Lend, despairing of no man.” — TR.

another in time of need, let your purses be open to one another, and do not sell the help you ought to give."

The real origin of the sentiment against interest-bearing loans is the outcry of the people; for to the people usurers have always been hateful. It is pleasant to receive money, and hard to return it. In primitive society men borrow little for purposes of trade; they borrow only for their support, and can return the loan only in case of some fortunate circumstance. As the lender takes the risk that the fortunate circumstance may not occur, the rate of interest is naturally very high. In Rome, it was excessive. The severity of the laws against debtors — laws always made by the rich — aroused the people against their creditors. In all ancient republics abolition of debt was always the desire of the people, and the watchword of demagogues seeking to gain popular favor. Christianity, upon its appearance, offered itself as the religion of the poor; an opinion which had become the passion of the poor was naturally adopted by its preachers, who confused interest-bearing loans with the harsh prosecution of insolvent debtors. Hence the tendency among the ancient doctors of the Church to regard interest-bearing loans as illicit.

Meanwhile, the causes that formerly made

the taking of interest unpopular have ceased to act with so much force. Trade has infinitely increased, and requires immense amounts of capital. The sums borrowed by the poor for subsistence are now but an insignificant fraction of all the money loaned. The greatest borrowers are the rich captains of industry who expect large returns from their borrowed capital.

The name of usurer is now applied only to lenders for a short term and at a high rate, to pawnbrokers, and to the contemptible men who make a trade of furnishing the prodigal sons of great families with sums of money at enormous interest wherewith to support their vices. The lenders for short terms are useful, after all, in placing petty tradesmen in a position to earn their own livelihood; pawnbrokers make their loans upon articles which it is possible for the borrower to do without, and the poor man esteems himself happy to obtain temporary relief with no risk but that of forfeiting his pledge. People entertain a feeling of gratitude rather than hatred toward these petty usurers who relieve them in time

memorial which we have summarized, one is struck with the strength of the arguments; and one cannot help admitting that Turgot has really said the last word upon the subject. This discussion has frequently been renewed since that time; it is not yet closed, perhaps will not soon be closed. The advocates of free rates of interest have made many excellent speeches; but whatever their merit, their eloquence, their ease of exposition, they have done nothing but reproduce in the language of the day the arguments of Turgot. There is but one arsenal where are to be found perfect weapons against the successors of Pothier and the Scholastic philosophers. That arsenal is the "Memorial on Loans of Money," sent to the Royal Council in 1769, in support of the appeal to the Council of the prosecutions for usury pending before the Seneschal of Angoulême.

III.

AFTER the dearth of capital, the story of which we have told, the Generality of Limoges was visited with another dearth much more dreadful than that of money, — a dearth of grain. This is at any time a fearful scourge; but it was especially to be dreaded in the France of those days, where means of communication were so imperfect, and where popular prejudice, countenanced by the most influential personages of the administration and the magistracy, rendered the grain trade extremely perilous. The royal declaration of 1763 and the edict of 1764 had decreed “the free circulation of grain” throughout the kingdom; but this freedom was constantly threatened by parliaments and municipal officers. Thus the Parliament of Bordeaux, by a decision of Jan. 17, 1770, had ordered the owners of land and farmers of land of Limousin and Périgord to convey each week to the markets a sufficient quantity of wheat to provision the said markets, and had forbidden them to sell, either by wholesale or retail, any portion of the grain anywhere save at these markets.

forbade any grain to be taken away, ordering the owners to "relinquish their wheat upon receiving the market price in ready money." Again, at Angoulême, the lieutenant of police took upon himself to order that all persons who had grain, either in store or otherwise, should keep no more than was absolutely sufficient for feeding themselves and their families, and that they should bring the residue to market on pain of a fine of one thousand francs. Thus, in addition to the local scarcity — which on account of the loss of the harvest was very real — there arose a general dearth, owing to the impossibility of making up by means of trade for the deficiency existing in the Generality. Warned of the danger, Turgot took the most energetic measures. He prevailed upon the Council to quash the Bordeaux decision. He commanded the Turenne municipality to withhold opposition to the export of grain. He obtained a decree of the Council forbidding the Angoulême lieutenant of police to execute his ordinance. At the same time he distributed a great many copies of the royal declaration of 1763 and of the edict of July, 1764, decreeing free trade in grain; likewise the work of Le Trosne entitled "Free Trade in Grain always Useful, never Injurious." Turgot was wont

to say: "Orders themselves must be sown in prepared soil." Moreover, he did not stop at these somewhat passive measures: he organized charitable workshops, compelled land-owners to feed their laborers, and took active measures for the construction of highways.

Meanwhile, political difficulties which did not fail to raise the price of grain, not only at Limoges but in many provinces, had strongly shaken the confidence of the Comptroller-General, Abbé Terray, — if ever he was sincere, — in the efficacy of the freedom of the grain-trade, which had been granted by Comptroller-General Bertin's edict of 1764. Abbé Terray therefore resolved to revoke the edict. Before carrying out his intention, — although he was perfectly decided to do so, being actuated by all sorts of reasons, some of them far from honest, — he made it known to the intendants, and asked their advice.

This was the occasion of Turgot's famous letters on Free Trade in Grain. He improvised them during a tour he was making for the purpose of apportioning the taxes among the "elections," the "sub-delegations," and the "communes." The winter was cold among the mountains, and inns were infrequent and wretched. It was while travelling amid such

classic work in circumstances so unfavorable. In these famous seven letters, all the questions at issue are stated with perfect clearness, and solved in the interests of freedom, by means of good sense and unanswerable logic. The first is dated from Limoges, October 30, 1770; the second, from Tulle, November 8; the third, from Egleton, November 10; the fourth from Egleton, November 11, and from Bort, November 13; the fifth, from St. Angel, November 14; the sixth, from Angoulême, November 27; and the seventh, from Limoges, December 7. Unfortunately, three have been lost; the originals were handed to Louis XVI. by Turgot himself at the time of the Bread Riots, and were never recovered; the minutes have disappeared, and nothing remains of them but abstracts and fragments. The rest are complete.

Some months previously the Comptroller-General, Abbé Terray, being at Compiègne with Turgot, had expressed his doubts touching the advantages of free trade in grain. "Three classes of persons," said he, "are interested in the regulation of the grain trade,—the landowners, the cultivators, and the consumers. I concede that the free system is extremely

favorable to the landowners. As to the cultivators, the profit they derive from it is merely temporary, since at the expiration of their leases the landowners take advantage of the increase in the price of grain to raise their rents. The consumers, finally, suffer the greatest injury from the free system, which raises the price beyond their means of subsistence, and increases all their expenses." So the Abbé Terray concluded that free trade was favorable only to a very small number of citizens, indifferent to the cultivators, and very prejudicial to a large majority of the king's subjects.

To this course of reasoning Turgot undertakes to reply in his letters. In the first place, he deems it an error to hold that free trade can result in raising the average price of grain; the contrary is true. He has no difficulty in proving that if landowners and cultivators cannot dispose freely of their harvests, — if they are compelled to sell cheap when the crop is small, and are not allowed to make up for the scarcity of the product by an enhancement of price, — then they will naturally prefer some kind of crop exposing them to less persecution. The policy of intervention in trade can have no result but to diminish the harvests, and this inevitably raises the average price of grain.

prices are more variable than under the
system. "Regulations and restrictions do not
produce a single additional ear, while they pre-
vent the superfluous grain of one place from
being carried to places where it is scarcer."

Turgot next examines what he calls the
three branches of Abbé Terray's opinion. To
begin with, he agrees with Terray that the land-
owners are interested in free trade; but not, as
the latter thinks, because free trade raises the
price, for, in fact, the contrary is true. One
of the results of restriction is, that in good years
the owner dares not store the excess of his
harvest, for fear of being prosecuted as a fore-
staller in the time of dearth. Thus it happens
that in times of abundance wheat is wasted,
fed to cattle; and this amounts to a diminution
of production, and consequently to a lessening
of the income from the soil. In one of the
three letters that were lost with the papers of
Louis XVI., Turgot had made a comparative
and detailed estimate of the expenses of pro-
duction and of the average price of the bushel
of wheat in France, in good, average, and bad
seasons; and had calculated that, under the
system of restriction, the impossibility of off-
setting the years of scarcity by the years of
abundance represented an annual loss of reve-
nue to the landowners alone, — not to speak

of laborers and consumers, — of fifty million francs.

In his sixth letter, Turgot passes to what he calls the second branch of Abbé Terray's argument; namely, the cultivator's point of view. The Comptroller-General considered the cultivator's interest as not at stake, because, should the farmer of land obtain any profit, the owner of the land would be sure to take it from him whenever his lease expired. But Abbé Terray forgot that the cultivation of great estates by tenant-farmers occupied, then as now, but a portion of the territory of France. Four sevenths of the land was cultivated by métayers, whose tillage was as wretched as their income. These cultivators had no leases; they received half the produce.¹ Here the interest of the cultivator could not differ from that of the landowner, and free trade, which according to Terray must be profitable to the one, could not but be profitable to the other. Turgot hoped so to improve the condition of the wretched métayers of his time as to enable them to escape by degrees from their penury,

¹ For an instructive account of the relations existing between the métayers and the proprietors, see John Morley's "Turgot" (*Critical Miscellanies*, vol. ii.); an essay which

gradually to accumulate a small estate in cattle, and to transform themselves into farmers paying a fixed rent to their proprietor.

In his opinion, this transformation would have resulted in raising the agriculture of the most backward provinces to a footing of equality with the richest parts of Normandy, Picardy, and Île-de-France. "Though the free system should produce no advantage save that of raising the agriculture of these provinces to an equality with that of the provinces now cultivated by tenant-farmers, though the revenue and the productions of the latter should not be equally increased, you cannot fail to perceive the immense advantage accruing to the state from this revolution alone, the immense increase of revenues and food-stuffs, and in general all that agriculture everywhere gains by freedom."

Turgot's last letter was devoted to Terray's delusion that the consumer's interests would be hurt by the suppression of the old-time police restrictions. Turgot here reproduced and developed all the arguments he had already brought forward to prove that free trade, by increasing the total production, could not fail to diminish the general market price for the benefit of consumers. There is no need of recapitulating these arguments; but a curious

thing is his discussion of the state monopoly of the sale of grain. It was in reality the royal wheat speculations—so it was then said—that Terray wished to favor by abrogating the edict of 1764; and by entering upon the discussion of monopoly, Turgot touched the tender spot. He could not imagine how a privileged company could exercise so disastrous a monopoly,—a monopoly of purchase against the laborer, a monopoly of sale against the consumer. Moreover, were the company composed of angels, it would be incapable of equalizing prices and of providing for the subsistence of all, and men would still maintain that it was composed only of rogues. “If a series of losses is occasioned by a series of poor harvests,—or, still more inevitably, by the maladministration, the mistakes, the slackness, the knavery of all kinds, connected with the management of an unwieldy enterprise conducted by too large a number of men,—what will become of the food-supply which the company is bound to furnish? The directors will be hanged, but that will not give the people bread.”

Meantime, Abbé Terray paid no attention, contenting himself with praising the letters and with holding them up to the other in-

1770, he abrogated the main provisions of the edict of 1764. All who wished to engage in the grain-trade were required to inscribe in the police registers their names, rank, places of residence and storage, together with the papers relative to their enterprises, and were compelled under very heavy penalties to sell no grain except in the market-place.

"The lords, the parsons, the laborers, the artisans of twenty villages, were compelled," says Voltaire, "to go or to send to the place of the market; and if any one sold at his own granary a bushel of wheat to his neighbor, he was condemned to a fine of five hundred francs, his wagon and horses being turned over to those who came with a troop of soldiery to perpetrate this outrage. Every lord who gave wheat or oats to a vassal in his village was subject to punishment as a criminal." To break up this abuse of power, it was necessary that Turgot should be made a minister.

CHAPTER V.

I. THE MINISTER. — II. FREE TRADE IN GRAIN.
— III. THE BREAD RIOTS. — IV. RECALL OF
THE PARLIAMENTS.

I.

ON coming to the throne, Louis XVI. had appointed old Count de Maurepas his Prime Minister. This appointment broke up the triumvirate of Aiguillon, Maupeou, and Terray; but D'Aiguillon alone was dismissed, the others being provisionally retained. But although Abbé Terray still bore the title of Comptroller-General, it may be said that his successor was already found, and this successor was Turgot. This choice had been determined by Abbé de Very and the Duchess D'Enville. Very was an old schoolfellow of Turgot, with whom he had never ceased to keep up the closest intimacy. At Bourges, where he had spent some years as Grand Vicar, Very had become acquainted with Count and Countess de Maurepas, then exiles from the Court of Louis XV., and had often told

them of his friend. The Countess admired Turgot's character, and was won over to his way of thinking. When, therefore, her husband became Prime Minister, she vigorously urged him to take into his ministry a man whose genius and probity had inspired her with such deep esteem.

The Duchess D'Enville belonged heart and soul to the party of the philosophers and economists, whom she was wont to receive at her fine castle of La Roche-Guyon. Being passionately in favor of free trade in grain, she was not spared in the satires, the ballads, and the caricatures with which the adherents of Court and Parliament incessantly pelted the new reformers. She belonged to the La Rochefoucauld family, to which Count de Maurepas was very proud of being related. She recommended Turgot to him with great urgency, at the very time when Countess de Maurepas and Very were likewise recommending him.

Thus Turgot became a minister, — not, perhaps, called by public opinion, for, properly speaking, public opinion did not yet exist, or was at most but newly born, but pointed out by admirers and friends to an omnipotent Prime Minister. Great was the joy in the camp of the economists and the Encyclopedists, though the disappointment was sharp when it was

learned that Turgot had been made Marine Minister, instead of Comptroller-General of the finances.

"This choice meets general approbation," writes Mercy to Maria Theresa; "not that Turgot is supposed to have much talent for marine affairs, but because he is known to be upright and honest to the core." Marie Antoinette is not ill pleased, and tells her mother that "Turgot has the reputation of being a very honest man." The Marine Ministry was, however, a mere transition. A month later (August 24, 1774), he was appointed Comptroller-General.

Upon thanking the king, Turgot was greatly moved. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse relates that he said, "I give myself not to the king, but to the honest man;" and that the king, taking both his hands, replied, "You shall not be deceived." Abbé de Very gives a similar account of this scene. The whole court was collected at Compègne, when Maurepas came to announce to Turgot his promotion to the post of Comptroller-General. Turgot called immediately upon the king, and, on returning, gave Very the following account of the interview he had just had with Louis XVI. "'I must beg leave, Sire, to set down in writing my

my stipulations touching the way in which you must needs support me in the administration of the finances; for, I confess to you, I tremble on account of the superficial knowledge I have of the subject.' 'Yes, yes,' replied the king, 'as you wish; but I give you my word of honor in advance (taking Turgot's hands as he spoke), to enter into all your views, and to support you always in the courageous courses that you will have to take.' "

The next day Turgot laid before the king his celebrated programme: "At this moment, Sire, I confine myself to recalling to your mind these three phrases,—no bankruptcy, no increase of taxation, no loans. No bankruptcy, either avowed or masked by forced reductions; no increase of taxation, the reason being found in the condition of your subjects, and still more in your Majesty's heart; no loans, because every loan inevitably diminishes the available revenue, necessitating after a time either bankruptcy or increase of taxation."

He proposed but one method of carrying out this programme; namely, to reduce expenditures below the sum total of the receipts. He knows well, he says, that all those who control expenditures in the different departments will insist that these expenditures are all indispensable, and he does not doubt that they

will support their claims with excellent reasons. He knows, however, that all their reasons must yield to the absolute necessity of economy. He forcibly represents to the king that the people can be relieved only by reform of abuses, and that this is difficult because so many persons are interested in maintaining these abuses, "for there is no abuse that does not give some one a livelihood. . . . I shall have to struggle against the natural kindness and generosity of Your Majesty and of the persons dearest to Your Majesty. . . . Your Majesty will recollect that it is to you personally, to the honest man, to the just and good man, rather than to the king, that I give myself."

It is plain that Turgot feared the queen's influence. I have seen the original draft of this programme. After having written the words, "generosity of Your Majesty," Turgot had already traced the words "and of the qu—" when he checked himself, and wrote instead, the word "persons."

On the morrow Turgot began his task. Appointed Comptroller-General, Aug. 24, 1774, he was to be dismissed May 12, 1776, at the end of twenty months and eighteen days. He enjoyed good health during but thirteen of these months, and was racked with gout during

upon his work. It may be affirmed that he never ceased for an instant frankly and straightforwardly to pursue his policy: namely, restoration of the finances, war upon abuses, destruction of privileges, emancipation of labor, trade, and manufactures, which were crushed by restrictions and monopolies. Thus, fifteen years before the Revolution of 1789, Turgot sought to carry out without violence all the reforms in the civil and economic order that had afterward to be conquered at such a cost of blood and tears.

Those who defended abuses in order to live by them found Turgot implacable, whenever he judged such persons intelligent enough to be accountable for their deeds; but to the ignorant he was indulgent, although he vigorously repressed the disorders to which the ignorant might be led. Moreover, he dealt prudently with vested interests, never failing to offer equitable compensation for the offices he suppressed. His arrival at the control of the finances had struck the farmers-general with consternation. "It is said that the financiers are panic-stricken," wrote Abbé Baudeau; "they need not be; M. Turgot is not the man incontinently to cancel the revenue-leases and the other financial arrangements."

At the time of his discussion with Miroménil,

in 1770, about the suppression of the *Corvée*, he made notes in reply to the observations of the Keeper of the Seals. In these notes is a passage that should be taken to heart by those who make of Turgot the chief of a sect of fanatics. "I know as well as any one that it is not always advisable to do the best thing possible, and that, though we should not tire of correcting little by little the defects of an ancient constitution, the work must go forward slowly, in proportion as public opinion and the course of events render changes practicable."

In order to convince public opinion, and to remove prejudices which he thought sprang from ignorance, he had conceived the plan of a Council similar to our Ministry of Public Instruction. On this subject he wrote to the king: —

"I think I can propose nothing more advantageous to your people, and better suited to maintain peace and good order, to give activity to all useful industry, to make your authority respected, and to attach more closely your subjects' hearts to Your Majesty, than to instruct them all touching their obligations to society and to your protecting power, touching the duties which these obligations impose, touching their interest in performing these duties both for the public good and for their private welfare. This moral and social instruction requires books made

for the purpose by competing authors, and a school-master in every parish who shall instruct the children in these subjects, and shall likewise teach the arts of writing, of reckoning, and of surveying. . . . The civic education which the Council of Instruction would cause to be given throughout the kingdom, and the rational books which the Council would cause to be made, and would require all professors to teach, would contribute still further to form an enlightened and virtuous people."

While preoccupied with the destruction of prejudice for the future, and with the formation, as he expressed it, of a new people, Turgot did not forget the present, and sought the readiest and surest means of healing the rooted sore of financial disorder,—a sore made deeper still by the corrupt administration of Abbé Terray. He lost no time in confiding to those of his collaborators in whom he had most confidence the task of bringing together the elements of what we to-day call the Budget of Receipts and Expenditures. Says Dupont de Nemours: "He ordered the construction of a methodical and circumstantial table containing the smallest details of all receipts and expenditures." This table has been preserved.

We likewise possess a similar statement drawn up by his predecessor a few days earlier. Abbé Terray had hoped that he might

retain his place in the ministry by adapting his policy to the new reign, and by changing his principles at a time when new principles appeared to be more in fashion. In his memorial and table Terray threw the responsibility for the deficit upon D'Aiguillon and De Boynes, the Ministers of War and of Marine Affairs, and made a great show of his own efforts to reduce expenses. Weber relates that the Abbé said, in conversation with his friends, that "he had succeeded by dint of injustice, of bankruptcies, of spoliations, in reducing the deficit to five millions. He had left fifty-seven millions in the Treasury, besides fourteen millions as an emergency fund; while anticipations upon the revenue were reduced to three months. He had supplied money for ordinary expenses, for preparations for war, for three weddings, and for many extraordinary expenses that must remain secret."

Turgot's enemies contrasted the condition of the Treasury at the time of his fall with its condition at the fall of Terray, and pretended that Turgot had exhausted the reserve left by his predecessor. Linguet called Terray a Sully, because he had amassed a treasure of fifty-six millions. According to this view, Turgot could be compared only to Sully's successors, who squandered the millions heaped

up at the Bastille. Discussion of the question at this time of day would be futile; posterity has made its choice between the unscrupulous minister of Louis XV. and the honest minister of Louis XVI.

II.

ONE of Turgot's first official acts was to remove the Master of Requests, Brochet de Saint-Prest, Director of the Wheat Monopoly. "I am delighted," wrote Mademoiselle de Lespinnasse, "that M. Turgot has already dismissed the ringleader in the wheat affair."

It will be remembered that four years previously (in 1770) Abbé Terray had annulled the liberal provisions of the declaration of 1763, and of the edict of 1764, concerning the grain-trade, and that he had subjected this trade anew to the former harsh police regulations. By this return to ancient usage he had flattered the prejudices of the people and of the parliaments, and had satisfied those publicists who thought the nation's food should not be abandoned to what they termed the unrestrained cupidity of tradesmen. He had found, moreover, a valuable defence of his policy in a book by a man of considerable intelligence, a particular friend of the men of letters and the

Encyclopedists, Abbé Galiani, whose illiberal economical ideas contrasted strangely with the opinions of the majority of his friends. Galiani had composed a series of dialogues on Free Trade in Grain, full of keen thrusts, of wit, and of examples drawn from general history, wherein he asserted that the policy of the state concerning grain must be merely an occasional policy, — that it must differ in different countries, and that in the same country there must be one rule for the interior and another for the seaboard.

Though Abbé Terray did not despise Galiani's help, he cared very little for his arguments. At bottom, it was neither the groans of the people, nor the wishes of the parliaments, nor Galiani's theories, that decided Terray to abrogate the edict of 1764. He was no more influenced by the arguments of those who reasoned in his favor than he had been by the advice of Turgot in the seven admirable letters from Limousin. His aim was nothing less than the establishment of the monopoly of the wheat-trade in the hands of his friends, of his partners, and perhaps, as has often been asserted, of the partners of Louis XV. It was his purpose to realize, if not the grain-ring, to which the too strong name of *Pacte de Famine* (starvation-contract) has

been given, at least a monopoly of speculation in the commodity of prime necessity, — the people's bread.

Much has been written concerning this grain-ring. Popular rumor has considerably magnified its importance; but there is no doubt that its operations in wheat were accompanied by theft, by embezzlement, by shameful speculation, — although no historian has succeeded in giving an accurate account of it, nor in furnishing a list of those who made a fortune or otherwise profited by it. A lawyer and man of affairs named Leprévost de Beaumont had got wind of a partnership-agreement between Malisset, a former Parisian baker who had invented a more perfect process of grinding wheat, and a certain number of capitalists. The aim of this society was to make a contract with the state for handling the king's wheat.

This was in 1765. The agreement in question contemplated a permanent supply. The wheat, or the flour into which it was made, was to be constantly kept in a good state of preservation; and to this end the wheat monopoly was authorized to sell the old stores and to replace them with new, according to the movement of prices. Thus speculation was excused, authorized, encouraged. Leprévost

de Beaumont saw in this agreement a contract to starve the people, — the *Parte de Famine*. He intended to inform against it; but before he could remit to the Parliament of Rouen a copy that he had prepared, he was seized and thrown into the Bastille, whence he was released only on the 14th of July, 1789, by the Revolution. "It is not," said he, "on the faith of suspicions, reports, conjectures, or false statements, that I inform against this horrible conspiracy; it is on the faith of its contract." And when Laverdy, the comptroller-general who had signed this contract in 1765, appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal on the 3d Brumaire, Year II., Leprévost voluntarily came to add his accusation to that of Fouquier-Tinville. In the mean time all those who had formed this company, who had been parties to the alleged starvation-contract, and who were accused by Leprévost de Beaumont with having gained "tens of hundreds of millions," had successively died ruined or insolvent; and Malisset himself, the general agent of the company, though still alive in 1791, was languishing in extreme penury and partial insanity.

The accusations of Leprévost de Beaumont

king, — perhaps with the king himself; there is proof that such disposition was made of the shares of the Farmers-General. No less clear is it that certain agents of the company speculated on their own account, and that some clerks committed embezzlements and thefts, squandering the products in a lordly luxury inconsistent with their patrimonial fortunes; but no traces have ever been found of the tens of hundreds of millions, — that is, of the billions, — which, according to Leprévost de Beaumont, were wrung from the wretched people by the accomplices of Malisset during the last years of Louis XV.

In consequence of the accusations of Leprévost de Beaumont, — whether it was feared that they might become public, or whether there were other reasons, public or private, — the Malisset lease had been cancelled by Abbé Terray himself. In its place a new combination, that of the profit-sharing Commission (*régie intéressée*), was devised. The aim of this Commission was to be the same as that of the preceding monopoly; namely, to supervise the distribution of the wheat, to the end that well-provided provinces should send of their abundance to those that lacked. “A Commission had been formed,” say the records touching Terray, “to take charge of the wheat

business. Under it were two directors, or general agents for purchase and transportation [Sorin de Bonne and Doumerc]; so that it should seem that all abuses in this quarter must have been instantly checked. But the Councillors of State complained that they were not consulted, that nothing was communicated to them; and in fact Abbé Terray had been wont to bring them the business all cut and dried. What had rendered this conduct more suspicious was that his underling, Brochet de Saint-Prest, who had entered the Council a beggar, now made a prodigious show of opulence and luxury; whence it was inferred that Messrs. Terray and Brochet, far from putting down the monopoly, were carrying it on through their henchmen, who were likewise enormously rich."

A month after the dismissal of Brochet de Saint-Prest, on the 17th of September, 1774, two fishermen found under a great stone in the Seine, near Suresnes, a bundle of papers concerning the Grain Commission. It came into the hands of the Intendant of Trade, Turgot's friend Albert the economist, who had taken the place of Brochet. Albert immediately placed seals upon the papers of Sorin and Doumerc, and clapped them both into the Bastille. Overwhelming evidence was discov-

ered against Brochet and his wife, who had borrowed large sums from the treasury of the Commission, but the accounts of the agents appeared correct. Traces were indeed found of some embezzlements, to which Comptroller-General Terray had doubtless shut his eyes; but nothing came to light to justify a criminal prosecution. Albert released the two agents, and declared that their accounts could be settled before the ordinary tribunal. As to the irregular profits gained in private speculations, it was impossible to make any estimate of them. After so many scandals and scandalous rumors, there was but one course to take, — to return to free trade in grain, and to dissolve all those companies and bureaux which “had they been composed of angels” could not escape popular wrath and suspicion. The Comptroller-General rightly resolved, therefore, to annul the law improvised in 1770 by Terray. He returned to the freedom — very restricted, indeed — of the declaration of 1763 and the edict of 1764.

The decree making the grain-trade free was signed in the Council of Finance, Sept. 13, 1774, but it was not published until the 20th. As early as the 7th, Baudeau announces in his journal that “the declaration of 1763 concerning domestic free trade is about to be

on the 18th he was still in the dark as to the decision, and said: "There are fine contradictory rumors about the future decree of the Council concerning the grain-trade. Some say it will confirm the old principles, or will at most but change one company for another. The purveyors, Sorin and Doumerc, brag that they will continue their jobbery."

The truth is, that in the week following Turgot's proposition there had been a debate in the Council. The Minister of Agriculture, Bertin, who as Comptroller-General had promulgated the liberal declaration of 1763 and the edict of 1764, while sharing Turgot's opinions, feared to shock popular prejudice. He was convinced that in the grain question experience sanctioned but one method,—that of "advancing by slow and successive steps." In September, 1774, after the first communication of the plan to the Council of Finance, and before anything had been made public, Bertin wrote to Turgot: "The documents you sent me, while arousing my hopes both for the general welfare and for that of my department, have renewed all my regrets touching the past. . . . I exhort you to proceed slowly and cautiously. I should venture to pray you,

if this were possible for you, as it is for me, and had you not long since shown your colors, to conceal your views from the child whom you have to govern and to cure. You cannot help playing the part of the dentist."

Bertin was not the only one to counsel prudence; there were others who wished to divert Turgot from his aim. These persons, being less attached to him, were repulsed with a certain disdain. Necker, who had just been crowned by the French Academy for his Eulogy of Colbert, requested an audience for the purpose of setting forth his views upon the wheat question. Morellet gives the following account of the interview: "M. Turgot replied to the author somewhat dryly, giving a personal turn to his observations, telling him he might print what he liked, that nothing was feared, that the public would judge, refusing moreover a copy of the manuscript, — all with that disdainful air which he too often had in dealing with ideas opposed to his own. I do not get this at second-hand. I saw it and heard it. M. Necker came with his manuscript; I heard the replies to his offers, and I saw him go away with the air of a man wounded but not cast down." Here is a glimpse of the minister of whom Madame de Boufflers said, "He is

Necker had his book printed and exposed for sale at the time of the disturbances; he sent a copy to Turgot, who acknowledged its reception by this laconic and cutting note of April 23, 1775: —

“I have received, Sir, the copy of your work that you caused to be left at my door; I thank you for this attention. If I had had to write upon this subject, and had felt bound to defend the opinion you have adopted, I should have awaited a more peaceful moment, when the question would have interested only those who can judge dispassionately. But upon this point, as upon others, each man has his own way of thinking. Sir, I have the honor to be,” etc.

Necker did not delay to reply. He humbly bases his justification upon the date of the authorization to print, — a date anterior to the disturbances, and even to the rise in the price of grain. “At that time,” says he, “there was not the least dearth anywhere. If the dearth that has since arisen in some places had seemed to you, Sir, or to the Lord Keeper, a motive for suspending the publication of this work, I should have shown respectful deference to your wishes. . . . It is distressing enough to me to differ with you upon some subjects of political economy; I would not have you suspect me of any other fault. Your

opinion on this subject is of great moment to me."

Necker's book had an immense success, and went into a great number of editions. Turgot's adversaries, the parliamentarians, the administrators of Colbert's school, extolled it to the sky. Partisans of the protective system made of it, and can still make of it, their manual; and this they fail not to do, drawing from it arguments whose value is increased by the honesty of the man who furnished them. There is another school attached to the doctrines of certain adversaries of Turgot, and professing for Necker's book a no less passionate admiration,—the socialistic school of labor organization. Thus Louis Blanc writes in his "History of the French Revolution": "Then Necker seized his pen, and, upon a subject that Galiani seemed to have exhausted, wrote a powerful book, a book pervaded with grave eloquence, with restrained feeling, a book of which certain pages might have been acknowledged both by a statesman and by a poet. Seeking in the grain question only an opportunity for opposing, in the interests of the people, the system of individualism, Necker went back to the first principles of society, and subjected them to an examination as lofty as it was audacious."

M. de Molinari, in his edition of the Grain Laws, pronounces a very different judgment, — a judgment which some may deem severe, but which no Liberal can call unjust. He finds in this book “much method and a certain warmth of style, but a complete want of principles and a puerile ignorance of facts. The author constantly goes by hypotheses, and more often than not his hypotheses are false. M. Necker’s book has contributed more than any other to darken counsel on the important question of food.”

The decree of Tuesday the 13th of September, 1774, was again submitted to the Council on the 20th, and finally published. Among the Minister’s friends there was great rejoicing. What first struck every one, and secured the approbation of all men of elevated views, was the care taken by Turgot to explain in a long preamble the reasons for this change in legislation. Such public discussion was a novelty; thus Turgot is the inventor of the now general usage of free governments, — of accompanying bills with a recital of motives. Mademoiselle de Lespinasse writes to M. de Guibert: “There will appear in a few days from now an edict on the grain-trade; it will be *justified*, — this form is new.” Condorcet says: “He set the useful example of giving the public a de-

tailed and reasoned statement of the principles upon which bills were drawn up." La Harpe writes: "He is the first among us to convert acts of sovereign authority into works of reason and persuasion." Nor does Voltaire withhold his praise: "Till now, we have not seen edicts in which the sovereign condescends to instruct his people, to reason with them, to point out their true interests, to persuade before commanding; the substance of almost all commands from the throne has hitherto been summed up in the words, 'for such is our good pleasure.'"

The preamble of the decree of the 13th of September is, in fact, a genuine discussion of principles, wherein Turgot triumphantly demonstrates that free trade in grain secures, more fully and conveniently than police regulations, the food-supply of nations. It is in some sort a new exposition of the doctrines so well upheld by him some years before in the seven letters on grain addressed to Terray.

"The freer, more active, more extended is trade," says this admirable statement, "the more promptly, efficiently, and abundantly are the people supplied. Prices become more uniform, and vary less from that average scale of prices in accordance with which wages are necessarily regulated. Food cannot be supplied

with equal success by the agency of the government. Its attention, divided among too many objects, must be less alert than that of merchants occupied with their own trade. Government ascertains needs and resources more tardily and less exactly. Its agents, having no interest in economy, buy at a higher rate, transport at greater expense, preserve with less precaution. Much grain is lost and damaged. For want of skill or through unfaithfulness these agents may enormously increase the expense of their operations. Without the knowledge of government, they may permit themselves illicit manipulations. Even when most innocent they cannot avoid being suspected; and the suspicion is always reflected upon the administration employing them, which becomes odious to the people by reason of the very efforts it makes to relieve public distress."

"No minister," says the *Metra* correspondence, "has made our masters speak a nobler and gentler language." Baudouin writes in his journal: "It is received with great applause by the public. The enemies of the good Turgot are somewhat abashed by the form of this decree, and by the wisdom of the principles which it most clearly explains." Voltaire writes to D'Alembert: "I have just read

M. Turgot's masterpiece. It seems to me that I behold new heavens and a new earth."

Unfortunately, the situation grew more and more difficult. The crops, scanty in 1774, promised to yield nothing in 1775. Bachaumont wrote in his "Secret Memoirs": "The Comptroller-General persists in his system of free trade in grain, and is not moved by the universal scarcity. He insists that it will be no severer than in the time of the monopoly, that the distress will be transient, and that the forestallers, punished for their greed, will lose forever the desire to hold their grain."

On the 18th of April, 1775, a band of peasants invaded Dijon, sacking houses, plundering mills, and making search for suspected stores of grain. The governor was threatened with death, and was accused of having said, "My men, the grass is beginning to sprout; go browse upon it." The bishop came into the street and harangued the peasants, finally prevailing upon them to leave the town. It has been often asked, then and since, what was the cause of an uprising so sudden and so soon suppressed? Is it to be regarded as simply a spontaneous movement on the part of a suffering people? It is certain that those who took part in the Dijon insurrection had not read Turgot's statement, and that they would not

have understood his earnest and lofty discussion of the principles of free trade; they were, therefore, certainly not provoked by the perusal of the edict and its preamble. It is related that Turgot had smilingly said, as he gave a copy of this preamble to a friend: "It will be pronounced diffuse and flat; my motive was this, — I wished to make it so clear that every village magistrate could explain it to the peasants; this is a matter in which the popular opinion avails much." The popular opinion was potent indeed for evil, but the village magistrates had not yet had time to mould it for good. The task is not so easy to dissipate the choke-damp of prejudice, which sometimes clings to the low levels of society for several centuries after all enlightened men have emerged from it.

Always to explain popular movements by the theory of a conspiracy is as cheap a proceeding as to attribute the recurring phenomena of Nature to the special intervention of a supernatural power. Such judgments are for the most part a mark of short-sightedness, and we should not be too ready to accept them. Nevertheless, there occurred circumstances at Dijon, as afterward at Pontoise, Versailles, and Paris, which are difficult to explain except by

less masked ringleaders egging on and guiding the multitude. "The first topic of my sermon," writes Voltaire to Condorcet, "is the baneful popular superstition against free trade in grain and against free trade in general. You see what outrages have just been perpetrated at Dijon. God grant that the fetiches have not underhandedly instigated this little Saint-Bartholomew!" And a month later to Madame de Saint-Julien: "Had you been at Dijon, you would have prevented the criminal uprising underhandedly instigated by M. Turgot's enemies."

Turgot replied to the Dijon insurrection, not by making a concession to the party of restriction, but, most characteristically, by giving new pledges of freedom of trade at Dijon, at Beaune, at Saint-Jean-de-Losne, and at Montbard. He endeavored to meet the dearth by diminishing the taxes. In a decree of the Council issued four days after the insurrection (April 22, 1775), and at the moment when he was informed of it at Paris, he said: "The king, desirous of preventing the grain necessary for the subsistence of his people from rising above the price which it must justly and

letters-patent of November 2, established freedom of trade, which by its sole activity will bring grain to the districts that may be in need, and will prevent by means of competition any excessive enhancement of price. . . . Therefore the collection of all duties upon grain and flour, whether at the city-gate or on the market-place, whether as town-dues, or corn-dues, or alnage, or market-dues, or any other dues whatsoever, is suspended in the towns of Dijon, Saint-Jean-de-Losne, and Montbard."

Meantime the high prices continued, and all whose interests had suffered by the destruction of the monopoly incessantly accused the Comptroller-General of looking with indifference upon the popular distress. But far from being indifferent, Turgot endeavored, as formerly at Limoges, to relieve the utterly destitute by the establishment of charitable workshops. In anticipation of a possible renewed rise in the price of provisions, he distributed through the priests of Paris a tract upon the means of providing for the Parisian people by an increase of work; and he sent instructions to all the provincial intendants for the establishment and management of charitable workshops in the country. These two documents are dated the 1st and 2d of May, 1775. On the very day of their promulgation the Bread Riots broke out

MOBS had been formed in the country, appearing first at Pontoise near the domains of the Prince of Conti, plundering, burning houses, demanding bread, and destroying grain; inciting the people to seize boat-loads of wheat and to divide the contents, as at Méry-on-Oise; and invading towns in order to disorganize the markets. Turgot's brother, the Chevalier, afterward told Soulavie that "the pillagers appeared to be supplied with gold and silver, and that their movements were directed according to the best principles of the art of war, doubtless by an experienced general."

On the 2d of May, 1775, the mob appeared at Versailles before the palace, filling the courts and vociferating for bread. Turgot was at Paris, whither he had gone to confer with the Lieutenant of Police and with Marshal Biron. The king appeared upon the balcony and attempted to speak, but was not heard. The report was spread that he had yielded to the urgency of those about him, and had promised to reduce the bread-rate to two sous; to this assertion the king's correspondence with Turgot, preserved by Marquis Turgot in the archives of Lantheuil Castle,

gives a crushing denial. During the day the king wrote two autograph letters to Turgot, at eleven in the morning and at two in the afternoon, respectively.¹ In the evening Turgot returned to Versailles, countermanded M. de Beauveau's order reducing the bread-rate, and forbade any one to require the dealers or the bakers to sell grain or bread below the market price.

The next day (May 3) the mob entered Paris and began to plunder; "there were some streets where one would have thought one's self in a city taken by storm." The police were lax, and did not interfere; it is even asserted that they forced several bakers to open their shops so that the rioters could carry off bread without paying for it. Turgot, who was continually on the road from Versailles to Paris, and return, called a meeting of the Council in the night of the 3d and 4th of May. He spoke with the greatest energy

¹ These two letters are given in full by M. Say, but are omitted in this translation. They relate merely to matters of detail, and derive their special interest from their correction of the histories touching the king's conduct on this occasion. It should be added, for the sake of the connection, that during this afternoon the bread-rate had been reduced at Versailles by M. de Beauveau, without the sanction of the king, who seems to have behaved with spirit and firmness. — TR.

against Lenoir, the Lieutenant of Police, who had done nothing for the suppression of disorder. Obtaining his dismissal, he appointed his friend Albert to the place. The commander of the night-watch of horse and foot was likewise dismissed, and Marshal Biron organized the resistance on a war footing. Two armies were immediately formed, — one for the interior of Paris, commanded by Biron; the other for the exterior, commanded by one of his lieutenants. On the 4th, the rioters attempted to continue their pillage, but were overawed by the attitude of the troops. The plunderers retired, and the Parisians went out of doors to look for the riot, — so they said, — and did not find it.

During the day Parliament assembled and caused a decree to be posted, forbidding tumultuous assemblages, adding that the king would be urged to reduce the bread-rate. Turgot immediately stopped the distribution of this decree, and had the parliamentary posters covered with placards, forbidding, in the king's name, tumultuous assemblages, on pain of death. At the same time he issued an edict assigning the prosecution of the seditious to the Criminal Chamber of La Tour-nelle. The Parliament met a second time to reply. It asserted that the edict assigning the

jurisdiction to La Tournelle was an infringement of its immemorial prerogative of "general police supervision." It issued a second decree claiming the jurisdiction, and again urging the king to reduce the bread-rate. Turgot immediately summoned the Parliament to Versailles, to receive the king's orders in a bed of justice.

The sitting was held on the morning of the 5th. Turgot not being present, the king informed him, in a note dated at six in the evening, that everything had passed off quietly, and that the counsellors "had much abated their impertinence." He continues: "My memory almost failed me during my first speech, but I went on as well as I could without becoming confused." The decree of the day before was quashed, and the jurisdiction assigned to the Provosts of the Marshalsea. The provostal court immediately sentenced two poor men to be hanged; these men mounted the scaffold crying that they died for the people. There were some engagements in the country, and it is said that twenty-three peasants were killed on the road to Versailles.

Meanwhile, in order to reassure the grain-dealers, Turgot had them indemnified for the merchandise of which they had been robbed

The communes were compelled to pay for the damage done by the rioters. A friend of the Marquis de Mirabeau, named De Butré, wrote to Turgot asking to be relieved of the tax levied upon his estate in consequence of the riots. Turgot answered: "Touching the tax imposed upon you in order to make good the injury to the grain-trade, I agree that it is disagreeable to you, as well as to many others who certainly took no part in the riots; but you must feel that although the general apportionment of such indemnifications is an evil to the innocent individuals upon whom it falls, yet it is indispensable for the purpose of establishing in the minds of merchants confidence against popular uprisings, and for interesting the whole country in the prevention of such movements."

It was a great victory for Turgot. The king had firmly supported him. "You are right," wrote the king to him on the 6th of May, "but all this will cost a great deal of money, and will necessitate great retrenchment; but, a little more or a little less, to this we must needs come. As good issues sometimes from evil, it will be seen from this that I am not so weak as was imagined, and that I shall have power to carry out my resolves. This will make our future proceedings easier; the truth is that I

am more embarrassed with one man than with fifty."

Thus Turgot was at this juncture in possession of the entire confidence of the king; he had triumphed, not merely over the riot, but over the opposition of the Parliament, over the captious spirit of the Parisians, over the indifference affected by his colleagues. The Parisians had said that they had looked for the riot and had not found it; they made songs about it; the women wore caps *à la révolte*; and the movement was derisively dubbed "The Flour War." Every one believed in the existence of a conspiracy. Turgot explicitly asserts it in his instructions to the king, and in his decrees. "Brigandage has been instigated," says he, "by strangers to the parishes which they came to desolate. . . . The aim of this conspiracy seems to have been to cause a real famine in the provinces around Paris and in Paris itself, so as to lash the starving and despairing people to the last degree of excess."¹ Writing to the King of Sweden on the 15th of July, following, Louis XVI. said: "The bad harvests and the evil spirit of some conspirators have incited rascals to plunder some markets." Maria Theresa, replying to Marie Antoinette,

¹ "Instructions sent by the Order of His Majesty to all

says, "I think with you that there is something underneath it." A great many persons were accused of taking part in this conspiracy. Some said it was Sartine; Turgot thought the Prince de Conti to have been at the bottom of it. "I should not venture to assert that he was wrong," writes Marmontel in his "Memoirs."

At all events, the hopes of the instigators were thoroughly disappointed; never had Turgot more ascendancy over the king than during the days following the suppression of the riots. The support given him by Malesherbes in his Remonstrance of May 21, and the entrance of that great and good man to the ministry (July 6, 1775), sealed the triumph of Turgot. Even the queen, who was the surest support of the Choiseul party, appeared disarmed, for a time, alas! too brief.

IV.

BUT we must turn back. In order not to interrupt the narrative of the grain troubles, from the restoration of free trade (September, 1774) to the Bread Riots (May, 1775), we have passed over the greatest event of the begin-

ning of the reign, — the recall of the Parliament.¹ Maupeou's *Coup d'État*, as it was then called, had produced in 1771 a profound sensation, which still existed with unabated intensity at the accession of Louis XVI. The suppression of the parliaments and the cruel violence exercised against their members had aroused an opposition in public sentiment, in support of the formidable opposition of interests aroused in the magistracy by Maupeou's radical change.

The new reign had been strongly urged to return to the ancient organization of justice. Maupeou had not, indeed, been able to avoid a rock that generally proves fatal to revolutions in which are involved the interests of a large body of office-holders. The appointments, made in haste, left much to be desired; the new judges were men of less weight than the old. It was not without reason that these "sham judges" failed to command popular re-

¹ It may not be amiss to remind the reader that the French parliaments (of which there were thirteen, that of Paris being the most important) were courts of justice rather than legislatures. Unlike the English Parliament, they were in no sense representative bodies, their members forming a judicial aristocracy, practically hereditary (*noblesse de robe*). With infinitely more integrity and public spirit than the nobility proper, they were, as might be expected, conservative in sentiment and stubbornly reactionary in tendency. — TR.

recall of the old. Let us not, however, suffer ourselves to be misled. The destruction of the ancient parliaments, and the organization of a magistracy with the sole function of administering justice without meddling with government or politics, was the essential condition of the civil, economical, and political reforms that might have anticipated the violence of the closing century, and might have permitted the French Revolution to accomplish its work by a gradual substitution of the principles of modern government for those of the Old Régime. M. de Larcy considers the recall of the parliaments as the first step in the direction of a policy that could end only in danger.¹

Turgot agreed with all his colleagues save Maurepas in opposing the recall. "We are assured," says the Métra correspondence, "that the king was obliged to take everything upon himself, and even to make use of his authority to bring it about, the members of his Council being of a contrary opinion." But Maurepas, more dexterous than Turgot, finally isolated him. Condorcet wrote to Turgot to urge him

¹ "Le Correspondant," August, 1868. Article on Louis XVI. and Turgot.

to maintain his opposition, and there is no doubt that Turgot inwardly assented to most of Condorcet's arguments. In October or November, 1774, Condorcet writes: —

“It is said that the old Parliament is about to be recalled unconditionally,—that is, with all its insolence, claims, and prejudices. The following will be the results of this arrangement: First, all reform in the laws will become impossible, for our laws are admirable for the judges and detestable for those judged. The more cruel, secret, oppressive, is criminal jurisprudence, the more powerful are the parliaments. Secondly, as these gentlemen are either ignorant of public opinion or despise it, they will be solicitous only of retaining favor with the masses; they will defend all the tyranny of the prohibitive system, will oppose all freedom, and will arouse sedition against any minister who may wish to establish freedom. Thirdly, as these gentlemen still cherish the opinions entertained by the fools of the fourteenth century, as they are absurdly ignorant of everything outside the covers of the *Olim Register*, as they despise all light, all philosophy, and as they are puffed up with the pride of ignorance, they will continue to be hostile to all enlightenment, will persecute it, and will endeavor to plunge us back into the barbarism which they style in their remonstrances ‘the simplicity of antique manners.’ . . . Adieu, Sir; I cannot bear to think that while you are minister, the right is to become impossible.”

Doubtless Turgot took care not to communicate Condorcet's letter to the Council, and his opposition to the restoration of the parliaments was probably based simply upon the interests of the royal authority. He had not been a pupil of the Physiocrats without being influenced even by such of their doctrines as may have appeared to him extreme. Moreover, he very sincerely believed that the king had power to alter ancient institutions whenever the public welfare required it, and he did not admit that the intervention of the Parliament was necessary in order to give the royal decisions the binding force of law. The phrase so often repeated by the Jacobin school — that is, by the men who have always been most opposed to his economical doctrines—is said to have originated with Turgot: "Give me five years of despotism, and France shall be free."

It must be acknowledged that Turgot was not entirely free to oppose, in the Council and before the king, Maurepas's proposition for the recall of the parliaments. He had concurred in the dismissal of Maupeou, and of Terray, whom he had succeeded after enduring him as a colleague for more than three

which Turgot sat as Minister of Naval Affairs, on the 24th of August, 1774, the anniversary of Saint-Bartholomew. He therefore shared with his colleagues the responsibility for what has been called a ministerial Saint-Bartholomew; and he certainly would not have contradicted the Count d'Aranda, who, hearing the jest, had added: "Yes, but not a massacre of the innocents." The necessary consequence of Maupeou's exile was the return of the parliaments. When Maurepas proposed it, Turgot was forced to submit, for it was a natural result of a policy with which he had been identified. On the 12th of November, 1774, Louis XVI. held a bed of justice, at which he restored the members of the Parliament of Paris to the functions of which they had been deprived on the 21st of January, 1771; while in a series of edicts registered at the same bed of justice he took—or thought he took—precautions against the administrative and political encroachments of the judiciary bodies. Some days later the Parliament assembled to protest against the curtailment of its authority; and soon, in spite of the royal edicts, things resumed their former course. The Parliament held that it was bound, even more than formerly, to defend what it called the ancient constitution of the kingdom against the proposed reforms.

The day when the Parliament recovered its authority was a fatal day for France. It was easy to foresee that the Parliament would become the fatal instrument of Turgot's fall, and that its stubborn adherence to the Old Régime would render a peaceful revolution more and more difficult.

CHAPTER VI.

- I. PREPARATION OF THE GREAT EDICTS. — II. ABOLITION OF THE CORVÉE. — III. SUPPRESSION OF TRADE-GUILDS; FREEDOM OF LABOR. — IV. THE BED OF JUSTICE.

I.

INTERRUPTED by the Bread Riots, but ever resolved to pursue prejudices, privileges, and abuses, encouraged moreover by his recent victory, by the king's confidence, and by the entrance into the Ministry of his friend the wise Malesherbes, Turgot resumed the already very advanced study of his vast plans with all the activity of which he was capable. This he did without either ostentation or mystery, so that those whose interests were to suffer had full opportunity to prepare for defence. In the front rank of his adversaries was the Parliament, and behind it the clergy; then the Court, the Choiseul party, the Parisian middle class threatened in its six merchant-guilds; and finally, in the Ministry itself, Huc de Miraménil

By the clergy Turgot was regarded, not without reason, as a philosopher. They remembered that phrase from the "Conciliator," in reference to the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes: "Religion was disgraced for the sake of flattering Louis XIV.;" and that other vigorously worded opinion that the king should not be the head of the Church, any more than the head of the Church should be king. "The English royal supremacy, the temporal power of the popes, — these are the two abusive extremes." Nor had the clergy forgiven the efforts he had made to obtain a modification of the king's coronation oath. Turgot had urged Louis XVI. to suppress the passage in which he swore "to entirely exterminate from his states all the heretics expressly condemned by the Church."

Louis was moved by Turgot's representations, and would probably have consented, had he not been overreached by Maurepas, who had no stomach for a quarrel with the bishops. After feebly holding off, the king yielded, and pronounced the ancient formula, — confining himself, however, to some inarticulate mumblings. There remains in the Lantheuil archives an interesting proof of the impression that Turgot had made upon the king's mind by his spoken and written observations, and

by going to Rheims to expostulate with the king at the last moment touching this grave declaration of intolerance. This is an autograph note from the king to Turgot, dated at Rheims, June 10, 1775:¹—

I have not had you summoned, Sir, to give you an answer to your yesterday's letter, because I preferred to send you a written token of my appreciation of your course on this occasion. I think that the step you have taken is a proof of your honor and of your attachment to me. I am deeply indebted to you, and shall always be grateful if you will address me with equal frankness. Nevertheless, I cannot at this moment follow your advice ; I have considered the matter since, and have conferred with several persons, and I think it will be less embarrassing to make no change. But I am none the less obliged for your advice, and you may be sure that it will remain secret, as I beg you to keep this letter.

LOUIS.

Turgot made no secret of his course, nor did he consider himself beaten. After the king had mumbled the famous formula at the coronation, Turgot addressed to him a long letter containing the most admirable advice and instruction touching toleration. " Can religion then command, can it permit, crimes? To decree a crime is to commit one ; he who

¹ The day before the coronation. — Tr.

commands another to murder is looked upon as a murderer. Now, the prince who orders his subject either to profess or to renounce a religion in which the subject does not believe, commands a crime. The subject who obeys, acts a lie, betrays his conscience, does what he believes that God forbids." Turgot does not, however, believe in the binding nature of formulas "drawn up in unenlightened ages. All is not lost; Your Majesty cannot be bound to do a thing that would be unjust."

The zealots, headed by the Count of Provence, expressed themselves with the extremest violence touching the Comptroller-General. The future Louis XVIII. condescended even to write with his own hand a diatribe against the minister; but his pamphlet, entitled "The Dream of M. Maurepas," produced little effect. It converted no one, being read only by those whose opinions were already formed. The zealots sought to disturb the king's conscience by telling him that Turgot did not attend mass. "Does M. Turgot not go to mass?" inquired the king of Maurepas. "I do not know, Sire," replied that vivacious functionary; "M. Terray went every day."

The queen submitted unwillingly to the control of her expenditures. Bailly relates that Turgot had obtained a promise from the king

that no order for cash should be issued within a certain time. Not many days later a check for 500,000 francs was presented at the Treasury in the name of "a certain personage of the Court," presumably the queen. Turgot went straight to the king for instructions. "I was taken by surprise," apologized the king. "Sire, what am I to do?" "Do not pay it." The minister obeyed.

Marie Antoinette passionately defended her favorites. It was in connection with an affair involving one of Choiseul's friends, Count de Guines, Ambassador to England, that she gave Maurepas to understand that he had better not fall out with her. This ambassador's secretary claimed from his chief considerable sums that the plaintiff had been compelled to pay, or still owed, for margins in stocks. The plaintiff alleged that he had acted as the ostensible agent of his ambassador, who — so the plaintiff said — was wont to gamble at the Exchange on the strength of the diplomatic secrets of which he was cognizant. Count de Guines solicited permission to produce in his defence before the court some of his despatches to the king. This permission the Council refused. Greatly incensed by this decision, the queen obtained from the king the permission which the Council had unanimously denied. It is

said that Maurepas was amazed at the ascendancy exercised by the queen, on this occasion, over the king's mind; and that Maurepas forthwith resolved to leave Turgot to himself, to take no further interest in his reforms, and, in case of need, to throw the Comptroller-General overboard in order to save the Prime Minister.

Although warned of the plots that were rife about him, Turgot's activity in the furtherance of his plan did not slacken. On the 5th of January, 1776, Turgot laid before the Council the six edicts that are his glory. These he prevailed upon the king to accept after a most thorough-going discussion; these he compelled the Parliament to register in a bed of justice, despite the most strenuous opposition; and these finally brought about his downfall. His triumph was his ruin.

II.

THE Six Edicts were of unequal importance. The first required the suppression of the *corvée*, or forced labor; the second, the suppression of the grain-police at Paris; the third, the suppression of the offices on the quays, at the markets, and on the wharves of Paris; the

fourth, the suppression of the exclusive industrial corporations or trade-guilds (*jurandes et maîtrises*); the fifth, the suppression of the Treasury of Poissy; the sixth, the modification of the duty on tallow.

We shall dwell only upon the edicts relating to the *corvée*¹ and to the *jurandes*. Several years before, while Intendant at Limoges, Turgot had made his first attempt to relieve the peasantry from the burden of forced labor. He recognized its extreme oppressiveness, and saw that the work thus done for the Board of Public Works was very unproductive. He had therefore endeavored to substitute a tax in money. Being powerless to modify the law, he had given to this exemption-tax the same distribution that obtained in the case of the *corvée*, making it a money-payment supplementary to the *taille* (ordinary tax). This purchase in money of exemption from forced labor was not without analogy with the present method. It is needless to state that the money-

¹ "Until the Regency," says John Morley, "this famous word had described only the services owed by dependents to their lords." From that time to the Revolution, it meant to the peasants twelve or fifteen days of forced labor each year for the construction and repair of roads, which, after all, were of little advantage to the peasants, but of great advantage "to the town merchants and the country gentlemen, who contributed not an hour nor a sou to the work." — Tr.

payment is to-day optional; not all the taxpayers take advantage of it, and the proportion between the payments in money and payments in labor varies from department to department. Statistics have brought out, however, a remarkable fact, — the departments where the largest proportion of this exemption-money is paid, are those of the old Generality of Limoges. This is a tradition dating from Turgot.

In the general preamble to his six edicts, Turgot recalled this conversion of the *corvée* into a tax payable in money, — a conversion effected in some other generalities in imitation of his example. Had he aimed simply at suppressing the *corvée*, or if, converting it into a money-tax, he had imposed it only upon those subject to the *taille*,¹ he might, as he believed, have proceeded by decree without insisting upon the registration of a law. His aim is, however, far wider: in the very first line of his preamble he declares that what he seeks to realize is nothing less than a revolution in the assessment of taxes. His purpose is, in fact, to abolish privileges, and to subject the nobility and the clergy to taxation upon an equal footing with other citizens. It was because it embodied so formal and so direct

¹ From which the clergy and the nobility were exempt. —

an attack upon privilege, and because it was a first step toward equality of taxation, that the edict concerning the *corvée* was singled out for the most strenuous opposition.

“The weight of this burden falls,” says the preamble, “and must fall, only upon the poorest class of our subjects, upon those who have no property save their hands and their industry, — upon the husbandmen and the farmers. The landowners, almost all of them privileged, are exempt, or contribute but little; yet it is to the landowners that the roads are useful by the increased value of the products of their estates due to improved facilities for communication and transport. . . . It is therefore the landowning class that reaps the fruit of the labor expended upon roads; and since it enjoys the interest, it alone should make the investment. How can it be just to make those pay who have nothing of their own, to force them to give their time and their labor without wages, to deprive them of their only resource against penury and hunger, for the benefit of citizens wealthier than they? . . . According to the account that we have caused to be made of the roads to be built and kept up in our different provinces, we think we can assure our subjects that the expenditure for this purpose

the entire territory of the elections.¹ This tax having as its object an expenditure advantageous to all landowners, we desire that all landowners, privileged and non-privileged, contribute to it, as is usual in the case of all local expenses."

The preamble and the purview of the edict abolishing forced labor had been the subject of very long study before they were submitted to the king, and were afterward thoroughly sifted and discussed by the Keeper of the Seals, Hue de Miroménil. Cherest, in his history of "The Fall of the Old Régime," says that the king asked also the advice of another member of the Council, whom he believes to have been Malesherbes. The memorial attributed by Cherest to Malesherbes is preserved in the National Archives.

In drawing up his observations, Miroménil followed the preamble and the provisions of the edict, paragraph by paragraph and article by article. He begins by declaring his impartiality; he does justice to the intentions of the author of the plan, and announces the intention of setting up no formal contradiction, but of

¹ *Pays d'élection*: provinces subdivided into fiscal districts (*élections*), in which the taxes were assessed by officers appointed for that purpose. The other provinces (*pays d'état*) had provincial Estates (assemblies) for granting or assessing the taxes. Tr

He then recalls the labors of Orry and of Trudaine, who thought the *corvée* could be reformed but not abolished, and endeavors to prove that all classes profit by the good condition of the roads. "The landowners are not the only ones," says he, "to derive advantage from well-kept highways; travellers, wagoners, even peasants who go on foot, derive equal advantage."

To this Turgot rejoins: "Touching the pedestrian peasants, the honorable Keeper of the Seals will pardon me for believing that the pleasure of walking upon a well-gravelled road does not compensate them for their gratuitous labor in constructing it."

It would be interesting to cite the whole discussion between these two eminent men. Miroménil displays great nimbleness of wit, and brings forward, under various and rather novel forms, arguments very old in substance. He seems to desire not to push the argument too far, and to think that some easy concessions will be enough to win over the minds of his opponents. Turgot permits himself to be shaken or surprised by no argument; he has an answer to everything. Since the entire discussion cannot be presented here, it is necessary to mention Miroménil's chief objections

and Turgot's replies touching the tax to be substituted for forced labor on roads.

"I shall not repeat here," says Miroménil, "what I have said, in my observations on the preamble, concerning the general inconveniences that may be found in the establishment of a territorial tax as a substitute for the *corvée* of men and horses; I shall merely remark that it is perhaps dangerous absolutely to destroy all privileges. I do not mean those attached to certain offices, which I prefer to regard as abuses acquired by purchase rather than as genuine privileges; but I cannot refrain from saying that in France the privilege of the nobility should be respected, and that it is the king's interest to maintain it."

Turgot replies: "The honorable Keeper of the Seals seems here to adopt the principle that, by the constitution of the state, the nobility should be exempted from all taxation. He seems even to think this to be a universal prejudice dangerous to disturb. If this prejudice be universal, I must be strangely deceived touching the views of all the thoughtful men I have met in the whole course of my life; for I can recall no company in which this idea has been looked upon as anything better than an obsolete claim abandoned by all enlightened persons, even in the order of the no-

bility. . . . Since the expenditures of the government are for the interests of all, all ought to contribute; and the more fully one enjoys the advantages of the social union, the more should one feel honored to share in its burdens. From this standpoint, it is difficult to see any justice in the pecuniary privilege of the nobility." In another passage: "There is a final reason why this privilege is more unjust and burdensome, while at the same time less respectable. By means of the readiness with which titles may be purchased, there is no rich man who may not become noble out of hand; so that, as the nobility includes the whole body of the rich, the cause of the privileged is no longer the cause of distinguished families *versus* commoners, — it is the cause of the rich against the poor. The motives that might lead us to respect privilege if it were limited to the race of the ancient defenders of the state, no longer have the same validity when this privilege is shared by the tribe of contractors who have robbed the state. Moreover, what kind of an administration would that be, which should lay all public burdens upon the shoulders of the poor, and let the rich go free?"

The memorial attributed by Cherest to Malesherbes contains analogous observations

couched in almost identical terms. Turgot asserted, not without reason, that his position had always been held by the statesmen who had attempted to regulate the finances, from the time of Desmarests, of Orry, and of Machault, to his own. "All the finance-ministers," said he, "have thought and done the same; all have sought to consolidate the twentieths, and to restrict the exemption from the *taille*." The author of the memorial shares this opinion; he begins thus: "Not every noble, indeed, is rich, but every rich man is noble. . . . The tax which in all reason and justice should be proportioned to wealth, is, on the contrary, a tax from which men are exempted on the score of wealth." And he closes as follows:

"From all this I conclude that the objection of the Parliament in favor of the privileges of the nobility is unfounded, and that it would be most dangerous for the king to allow this system to gain favor, because it tends to counteract all the great things that have been done for a century, and all the good that can be done in the matter of taxation. Finally, while as unfriendly to despotism as ever, I shall say constantly to the king, to the Parliament, and, if necessary, to the whole nation, that this is one of those matters that must be decided by the absolute will of the king, — and for this reason:

at bottom, this is a lawsuit between the rich and the poor. Now, of what is the Parliament made up? Of men wealthy in comparison with the masses, and all noble, since their offices convey nobility. The Court, whose clamor is so powerful, — of what is it composed? Of great lords, the majority of whom own estates that will be subject to the tax, and that have not been subject to the *corvée*. Of what is the Parisian public composed? Of many nobles, or rich men enjoying the privileges of nobility, — these are they whose talk is loudest, — and of a people subject to other taxes, but not to the *taille* or to the *corvée*. Consequently, neither the remonstrances of the Parliament, nor the applause of the Parisian public, nor even the clamor of the Court, should in any wise prejudice this case. . . . Let the States General or the States Provincial of France be assembled, — this is the wish of my heart, and of all good Frenchmen. Let these estates be so constituted that the people may make itself heard, — and not have, as its sole representatives, bailiffs, seneschals, officials, whose interests are not those of the true people, and who are always dependent upon a great lord or a minister; then, indeed, will it seem just to refer to such an assembly the question of the distribution of the taxes. But so long as the

Turgot yielded to Miroménil only upon the question of the clergy, but preserving his opinion: "The privilege of the clergy is open to the same discussion as that of the nobility; I think it no better founded. As, however, after deducting tithes and surplice-fees, ecclesiastical property forms no very considerable object, I will consent to adjourn the discussion of the principle, and to sacrifice the provision relating to the clergy, notwithstanding the justice of it." And, alluding to the opposition of Maurepas, he adds: "And perhaps the opinions of the king and of the Ministry are undecided enough to make it worth while to avoid having two quarrels at once."

Miroménil had asserted that there were in France three great orders,—the Clergy, the Nobility, and the Third Estate; and that each of these orders had its rights, its privileges, perhaps its prejudices, which it was necessary to preserve intact. Turgot replied: "The honorable Keeper of the Seals talks of the privileges of the Third Estate. It is known that the Nobility and the Clergy have privileges, and that, in the Third Estate, some

cities and some private corporations have them. But the Third Estate, as a whole, — that is, the people, — is far from having privileges; it has them in inverse order, since the burden that the exempted should have borne is always shifted to the backs of those not exempted."

M. de Miroménil read the answers that Turgot had written in the margin of his manuscript, and returned the packet with this note: "M. de Miroménil sends, with a thousand compliments to M. Turgot, the plan of an edict concerning the *corvées*, and his observations. He also returns the papers concerning compulsory feudal service (*les banalités*), and confesses himself to be little impressed by the replies to his observations."

The king was more impressed by them than the Keeper of the Seals, and permitted the edicts approved by him to be sent to the Parliament on the 9th of February, 1776. The time that had elapsed between the submission of the edicts to the king and the 9th of February had been employed by opponents in organizing their opposition. Turgot's friends, made anxious by this, were eager to have the matter settled. "The well-intentioned members of the Parliament," wrote Trudaine, "who are few in number, desire a firm course, and for that haste is requisite. The more delay

there is, the more chance there will be for systematic opposition." The Parliament registered the edict suppressing the Treasury of Poissy, and appointed commissioners to examine the others. On the 17th of February the Attorney-General and the commissioners reported unfavorably on the edict for the suppression of forced labor. A vote was taken, and it was decided "that a Remonstrance should be laid before the king, entreating him to graciously withdraw the said edict, as being inadmissible both in substance and in details."

There was no longer any doubt that the bed of justice was inevitable. As, however, Malesherbes hesitated to have recourse to this final measure, nearly a month was lost, and during this time the cabals grew extremely violent. Trudaine did not cease to urge haste. "All interests," so he wrote, "are affected by the public suspense; a thousand cabals, active, violent, audacious, openly attack the existence of the Ministry. The ministers seem tranquil, slow, often undecided; they are thought to be uncertain of their position, anxious, dismayed. It is not even known that they are united among themselves. In this condition, all delay is dangerous. . . . Since the assembling

so long as the king remains undecided."

Meanwhile, the king appeared unshaken. "The king has made edicts," wrote Marie Antoinette to Maria Theresa, "which will perhaps occasion new broils with the Parliament; I hope matters will not go so far as during the last reign, and that the king will maintain his authority." But Malesherbes, Turgot's friend and collaborator, asked for modifications in the purview of the edict concerning the *corvées*, in order to prevent certain administrative abuses; and he desired, in case the consent of the Parliament could not be obtained, that recourse should be had to the Court of Aids. Trudaine held that these half-way measures would be taken for weakness, and Turgot was naturally of his opinion. The king being with Turgot, it was determined to proceed to the bed of justice.

In the interval, the pamphleteering warfare went forward with increasing vigor. Each day saw the hatching of a new petition, a new memorial, new ballads, epigrams, and puns.

"M. de Malesherbes does all ;

"M. de Sartine doubts all ;

"M. Turgot spoils all ;

"M. de Saint-Germain routs all ;

"M. de Maurepas mocks all."

Turgot's friends allowed themselves to be moved by all these stings, — a great error; they even became angry, and thus put themselves doubly in the wrong. The Council satisfied them by taking severe measures against the authors of the memorials and pamphlets, suppressing these works by a decree of the 22d of February, 1776. The Parliament saw in this act of severity a challenge on the part of Turgot's friends, and responded on the 23d by proscribing a book against the privileged classes, entitled "The Inconveniences of Feudal Laws," which was just then making a great stir. The author, Boncerf, was one of Turgot's secretaries; he acknowledged the work, and was ordered to be committed. This book seems very moderate to those who read it to-day. The author enumerates, without exaggeration of language, the disadvantages of feudal laws, and proposes simply to authorize or to command the purchase of exemption from them. Present vassals were to be allowed to redeem their lands; their heirs were to be obliged to do so. The Parliament looked upon the discussion of this system as a kind of criminal offence, and condemned the brochure "as prejudicial to the laws and customs of France, to the sacred and inalienable rights of the crown, and to the right of private own

whole constitution of the monarchy by arousing all vassals against their lords and against the king himself, and by representing all feudal and domanial rights as so many usurpations, vexations, and outrages, equally hateful and absurd."

Turgot immediately called Boncerf to Versailles to protect him from the Parliament, to which he sent orders to desist from prosecution. Hearing of this vigorous course, Voltaire cannot contain himself for joy, and writes to Audibert, February 28: "Perhaps you already know that this Parliament, having burned by the hangman at the foot of its great staircase an excellent book in favor of the people, composed by M. de Boncerf, Chief Clerk to M. Turgot, and having ordered the author to be committed, His Majesty has commanded them to annul their decree, and has forbidden them to condemn books. His Majesty gives them to know that such condemnations must proceed from his Attorney-General, and that he cannot make them without the king's orders. Here are judgments worthy of Titus and Marcus Aurelius; these legal gentlemen are, however, not Roman senators. As to M. Turgot, he has all the bearing of an ancient Roman."

All these skirmishes had preceded the opening of grand hostilities. A war without quarter was about to begin, — to end, alas! in the downfall of the defenders of equality, and in the triumph of the coalition of the privileged. On the 2d of March, 1776, the Parliament drew up the text of its Remonstrance. It sent a deputation to Versailles to bear the Remonstrance to the king, and to ask him to fix a time for its formal presentation by the Parliament. On the 7th, Louis replied as follows to a second deputation: "I have examined the Remonstrance of my Parliament; it contains nothing that had not been foreseen and maturely considered."

The Parliament urged in its Remonstrance that if it had failed to register the edict on the suppression of the *corvée*, this was because such suppression would be a violation of justice. "The first rule of justice is to preserve to each one his own: a fundamental rule of natural law, of the law of nations, and of civil government, — a rule which consists not only in maintaining the rights of property, but in conserving those which are attached to the person, and which grow out of the prerogatives of birth and rank. . . . The right of the *corvée* belonged to the Franks over their men. . . . When their serfs obtained emancipation, in

becoming free citizens but commoners, they became subject to the *corvée*. . . . To subject the nobles to a redemption-tax for the *corvée*, to the prejudice of the maxim that 'no one is liable to the *corvée* who is not liable to the *taille*,' is to decide them liable to the *taille* like commoners."

The refusal to listen to the Remonstrance was the announcement of the bed of justice; before describing it, we must examine the edict suppressing the trade-guilds.

III.

THE suppression of the Exclusive Industrial Corporations¹ and the establishment of Freedom of Labor constitute Turgot's greatest reform, — that in which his personal influence is most plainly seen, and which won its final triumph in the Revolution by the sheer force of liberal ideas. Civil equality and the abolition of privileges may be, and have been, the result of another passion than that of freedom, — of this our whole history since 1789 is the proof. The protective system and the organization of labor are not incompatible with what

¹ *Jurandes* and *matrises*. Literally, wardenships and masterships of guilds. — Tr.

are called modern governments, — the governments that have succeeded the Old Régime. Thus it is to Turgot much more than to the Revolution that we are indebted for freedom of labor; and it is to the freedom of labor inaugurated by Turgot that, after the definitive triumph of his ideas, the France of the nineteenth century owes the astonishing outburst of industrial force which the present generation has witnessed.

The preamble of the edict for the suppression of the trade-guilds is a masterly work, of which it is proper to give an analysis, with extracts embodying the main considerations.

The right to labor is a natural right. It has been infringed, indeed, by ancient institutions, but these infringements have been justified neither by time, nor by public opinion, nor by the acts of authority which seem to have sanctioned them. In almost all towns the exercise of the different arts and trades was centred in the hands of a small number of masters united in guilds, who alone had the freedom to manufacture and sell the articles of the particular industry of which they held the exclusive privilege. He who devoted himself to any art or trade could not exercise it freely

tedious; and superfluous tests, and at the cost of multiplied exactions depriving him of a part of the capital requisite for establishing a business or for fitting up a workshop. Those who could not afford these expenses were reduced to a precarious existence under the sway of the masters, with no choice but to live in penury at home or to carry to some foreign land an industry that might have been useful to their country.

Citizens of all classes were deprived of the right of choosing the workmen whom they would have liked to employ, and of the advantages in price and execution secured by competition. Frequently the simplest piece of work could not be executed except by application to the members of different guilds, and one had to bear the delays, the bad faith, the exactions, encouraged by the claims of these different corporations and by the caprices of their arbitrary and selfish system.

"These abuses crept in by degrees. They were originally the outcome of the selfishness of individuals, who established them against the public. It was after a long period of time

of the same craft to assemble and to unite in an association."

The preamble shows that the guilds originated with the free cities. When towns began to emancipate themselves from feudal bondage, and to form free communities, it became the custom to classify citizens according to their trade. "Thus the various crafts became so many different communities, of which the general community was made up. The religious brotherhoods, by tightening the cords that united the individuals of the same craft, gave them more frequent occasions to assemble, and to occupy themselves in these meetings with the common interest of their particular society, — an interest which they pursued with continued activity, to the prejudice of the interests of society in general. Once formed, the guilds enacted statutes, and under various pretexts of public welfare obtained their authorization by the magistracy." The preamble goes on to enumerate the provisions of the majority of the statutes of the guilds, — provisions tyrannical, and opposed to public welfare. The main object of these guilds was to restrict the number of masters as much as possible, and to render attainment of the mastership almost insuperably difficult for all but children of masters.

"The spirit of monopoly which dictated the enactment of these statutes went to all lengths. Some of these statutes exclude from apprenticeship, and consequently from mastership, young men who marry before becoming masters. Women are excluded from the trades most natural to them, as embroidery, which they can exercise only on their own account.

"We shall not continue the enumeration of the strange and tyrannical provisions, contrary to humanity and to good morals, that fill these obscure codes enacted by greed, adopted in times of ignorance without examination, and needing only to be known, to be objects of public indignation."

The edict is divided into twenty-four articles. Article I. declares that all persons, even foreigners, are free to practise their art, craft, or trade in their own way, and that they may even combine several ; and it suppresses all the companies and guilds of merchants and artisans, together with the masterships and wardenships. Articles II. and III. command all merchants and artisans to make a declaration in advance before the Lieutenant-General of Police, for purposes of registration. Arti-

masterships having been made official in consideration of certain payments to the Royal Bureau of Contingent Taxes. Goldsmiths, apothecaries, printers, and booksellers were likewise excepted on account of police regulations to which they were subject. Articles VI., VII., VIII., and IX. set forth the conditions of the registration of artisans, and the precautions to be taken in the sale of drugs. Article X. establishes syndics in the different quarters of the cities, especially at Paris, to watch over the tradesmen and artisans of their districts, without distinction of condition or craft, to report to the Lieutenant-General of Police, and to receive and transmit his orders. Articles XI. and XII. lay down a summary form of procedure, in accordance with which the Lieutenant-General of Police is to decide the disputes that may arise on account of defective and scamped work. Article XIII. expressly forbids the sworn wardens to continue to exercise their functions.

Article XIV. is the one which since the Revolution has been most frequently attacked. It prohibits all masters, companions, journeymen, and apprentices of the companies and guilds from forming any union or association, no matter on what pretext. The remaining articles relate to questions of jurisdiction and

procedure, and fix the methods of liquidation of the guilds, especially those of Paris, whose net assets, after the payment of debts, were to be divided equally among the masters.

Such is the celebrated edict which for the first time introduced freedom of labor into France. Detractors of the reform were not wanting then, and they still exist; we shall reproduce their objections, which were appropriated by the Parliament in its report upon the bed of justice.

IV.

THE Bed of Justice for the registration of Turgot's famous edicts was held at Versailles, on the 12th of March, 1776. The speakers were the king, Hue de Miroménil Keeper of the Seals, First President d'Aligre, and Séguier the Royal Advocate.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "I have called you together to make known to you my will; my Keeper of the Seals will explain it."

Miroménil then made a summary statement of the edicts and a justification of them, — including the one for the abolition of the *corvée*, which he had so perseveringly opposed in the Council. His speech is a very short analysis

of the general preamble, and of the special preambles of the several edicts. The duties of his office obliged him to defend what he had so sharply attacked.

The First President followed the Keeper of the Seals, speaking for the Parliament, expressing himself in a pompous style, and as if terror-smitten.

“Sire, on this day, when Your Majesty’s power is exerted only in the persuasion that your goodness is displayed, the pomp that surrounds Your Majesty, and the absolute use that you make of your authority, fill all Your Majesty’s subjects with profound dismay, and bespeak a grievous duress. . . . Why is it that to-day deep gloom everywhere confronts Your Majesty’s august gaze? If Your Majesty deigns to cast your eyes upon the people, you will see the people in consternation; if upon the capital, you will see the capital in alarm. . . . This edict [touching the *corvée*], by the introduction of a new kind of perpetual and arbitrary taxation of real estate, is essentially prejudicial to the property of the poor as well as of the rich, and deals a new blow to the natural freedom of the no-

suppression of the trade-guilds, he declares that "this edict sweeps away at once all the ties of order established for the crafts of artisans and tradesmen. It leaves unchecked and uncurbed the turbulent and licentious youth, who, scarcely restrained by the public police, by the inner discipline of the guilds, and by the domestic authority of masters over their journeymen, are capable of rushing into all kinds of excess."

Next, the Keeper of the Seals ordered the edict concerning the *corvée* to be read, and said to the king's people that they could speak. Séguier then made a first speech, reproducing all the arguments developed by Miroménil in his non-public observations, and closed by proposing to employ soldiers, in time of peace, for the maintenance of the roads. After this address, to which no answer was made, the Keeper of the Seals received the command of the king to proceed to the formality of "opinions," beginning with the princes of the blood; then, having ascended to the king's place and returned to his own, seated, and with covered head, he pronounced

The same ceremonial was observed in the case of the next two edicts; the fourth edict was the one for the abolition of the trade-guilds. In setting forth the motives of the Parliament in refusing to register this edict, Séguier made a much longer harangue than any of the preceding. According to him, the guilds could be considered as so many little republics solely occupied with the common interests of their members; and if it is true that the general interest is made up of the union of private interests, it seemed to him equally true that each member, in working for his own advantage, was really working — even though involuntarily — for the advantage of the whole community. To relax the springs moving this multitude of bodies, to abolish the masterships, to annul the regulations, to disunite the members of all these guilds, was to destroy the resources that trade must desire for its own preservation. The Royal Advocate then went on to describe the isolated workman, free to follow all the vagaries of an undisciplined imagination, thirsting for gain, and secretly scheming to dupe both citizens and foreigners. “ These restraints it is, these shackles, these prohibitions, that form the glory, the safety, the immensity of the commerce of France ”

there are no institutions into which some abuses have not crept, and the difference is immense between destroying the abuses, and destroying the body in which these abuses may exist." The number of the guilds seems to him too great. "Why, for example, is it necessary that flower-girls should form a guild subject to regulations? What need of statutes for making and selling nosegays?" He deems some consolidations expedient, as of tailors and old-clothesmen, of caterers and cookshop-keepers, of bakers and pastry-cooks. He would also admit women to the mastership as milliners, embroiderers, hair-dressers. "But we must preserve that which was sanctioned by Henry IV., by Louis XIV., by Sully, and by Colbert. Never was a prince more beloved than Henry IV.; and Colbert, who changed the face of France and gave new life to commerce, ordained that all persons engaged in trade or traffic in the city of Paris should be and remain forever united in exclusive industrial corporations."

At the close of this long harangue the edict was registered. The edict for the reduction of the duty on tallow was last read. After a few words it was likewise registered, and

the long sitting of more than five hours was ended.¹

It is to be observed that Articles XIII. and XIV. of the edict touching the exclusive industrial corporations, or trade-guilds, — articles which have since aroused so much discussion in the economical and liberal school, — occasioned no remark at the time of the promulgation of the edict, and provoked no opposition either on the part of the merchant companies in their memorials, or on the part of the Parliament in its Remonstrance, or on the part of the Royal Advocate in his harangues. The reader will recollect that these articles are the ones prohibiting all union or association of workmen and employers of the same craft. That famous principle with which Adam Smith has been much reproached, and which has been sometimes excused by treating it as a whim, has only in our own time been embodied in law. Nevertheless, it was a sincere expression of the fear that the law would not efficiently enough protect the freedom of consumers. Adam Smith's words are: —

“ People of the same trade seldom meet to-

¹ These proceedings were called a *bed* of justice in allusion to the comfortable upholstery of the king's seat. Evidently the long-windedness of the speeches rendered cushions something more than a luxury. — TR.

the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public, or in some contrivance to raise prices." ¹

It cannot be denied that in forbidding artisans to form unions and combinations Turgot set up a barrier against the exercise of what the modern liberal school has always claimed as a right. But it should be clearly understood that when Turgot suppressed the exclusive industrial corporations, he had no thought of legislating upon the right of combination and association, — a right not then recognized in France by the common law. The attempt to reconcile this right with the right of the state to protect itself against what has been called "a state within a state," is an entirely new problem. Turgot, in 1776, had not to vex himself with a question that had not yet arisen. Even if, foreseeing the future, he had sought to solve it, would he have been to blame had he failed? For a hundred years this problem has been, in France, the most constant preoccupation of statesmen of all parties. We have had governments based upon the principle of authority, and governments based upon the principle of freedom, and the latter have failed as signally as the former to answer liberal

¹ "Wealth of Nations," book i. chap. x. part ii., i.

notions of justice in this matter. The laws upon freedom of association are still to be made; the rights of the unions and the rights of the state are still in conflict. The debate is still open; for no one has yet succeeded in finding the formula that shall guarantee these respective rights, without either enslaving the citizen or disarming the state.

CHAPTER VII.

INCREASING DIFFICULTIES. — RESIGNATION OF
MALESHERBES. — TURGOT'S SECRET LETTERS
TO THE KING. — TURGOT IN DISFAVOR. —
HIS RESIGNATION. — HIS DEATH.

WHAT impression this day left upon the king it is hard to discover. Had Turgot wearied him by exacting this new and considerable effort? What we know is, that the influences hostile to Turgot began from that moment to be felt with a growing might that soon became irresistible. The queen had succeeded in obtaining complete ascendancy over the king; of this she gave a final proof in the case of that same Count de Guines in whose favor she had once before overruled the unanimous advice of the Council. The end was near.

At the moment when the Ministry began to be preoccupied with American affairs, M. de Vergennes and Turgot had vigorously urged the king to authorize them to recall Count de Guines from London. They justly deemed

him unfitted to conduct delicate negotiations. To their representations the king had yielded, and had even written to Count de Vergennes authorizing him to change the ambassador. Greatly irritated by this decision, the queen ascribed her favorite's disgrace rather to Turgot than to Vergennes. She could not give back to Count de Guines the place that had been taken from him, but she had the title of Duke conferred upon him, with a letter of congratulation signed by the king. "I do justice to your conduct," wrote Louis XVI., "and I grant you the honors of the Louvre, with permission to bear the title of Duke. You may show this letter." Count de Mercy wrote to Maria Theresa: "In the affair of the Count de Guines the king stands in manifest contradiction with himself, by reason of letters written with his own hand to Count de Vergennes and to Count de Guines, — letters entirely opposite in tenor; he compromises himself and all his ministers in the eyes of the public, which is unaware that all this is done by the will of the queen, and by a kind of violence exercised by her over the king. The Comptroller-General, aware of the hatred the queen bears him, has decided, largely on this account, to retire; the queen's plan was to require of the king that Turgot be dismissed, and even thrown into the

resentations have been necessary in order to neutralize the effects of her wrath, which had no other motive than the steps that Turgot thought it his duty to take toward the recall of Count de Guines." After the bed of justice, the enemies of Turgot were exultant; they knew the king to be fatigued, and they foresaw the approaching downfall of the Comptroller-General. Trudaine's prophecy to Turgot, on the eve of the sending of the edicts to the Parliament, was coming true: "Be sure, there is not a Parliament-Counsellor who does not regard the promulgation of the edicts as the end of your ministry. Should this misfortune come, I think the authority of the king would be lost for the rest of his reign."

The Choiseul party no longer concealed their delight. "The Turgot is going to pieces," wrote Madame du Deffant to the Duchess du Choiseul; and when she heard "the Turgot news" she wrote: "What events, what surprises, and, I may add, what joy and delight! I confess that what has pleased me most of all is the triumph of M. de Guignes [Guines]." The Duchess replied: "Like you, I was transported with joy at the triumph of M. de Guignes; the accompanying disgrace of the two ministers

makes him seem to me like a victorious Roman proconsul, dragging his captives at the tail of his triumphal car." On the 1st of June, 1776, Galiani wrote to Madame d'Épinay: "From the ambassador's brother-in-law I had heard of the change of ministry, and I heard nothing more than I knew when M. Turgot was made Comptroller-General. I pray you to re-read what I then wrote you." The remarkable prophecy to which Galiani refers does great honor to his sharp-sightedness; it is to be found in his letter from Naples, of the 17th of September, 1774. "M. Turgot is at last Comptroller-General. He will hold office for too short a time to carry out his plans; his financial administration will be like his brother's in Cayenne. He will punish some rogues, he will fret and fume, he will desire to do right, and will meet thorns, obstacles, rascals, everywhere. Credit will decline; he will be de-tested; it will be said that he is not good at the work; enthusiasm will grow cold; he will withdraw or will be dismissed; and they will once more repent of the error of wishing to give such a post, in a monarchy like yours, to a virtuous and very philosophic man." There were minor intrigues, like that of Marquis de Pezay, who succeeded in drawing the king's attention to certain notes upon Turgot's Bud-

get, — notes, said to have been drawn up by Necker himself, skilfully presenting the subject very much to the disadvantage of the Comptroller-General. It was said, as Abbé Galiani had prophesied, that he was “not good at the work.” There was also an affair of forged letters seized by the Bureau of Intercepted Letters.¹ Dupont de Nemours gives a full account of the matter.

These secondary manœuvres may have contributed to embitter the king's mind; but the queen's opposition, the resignation of Malesherbes, and the singularly harsh and somewhat haughty letters written by Turgot to the king for the purpose of counteracting Maurepas's influence and of obtaining a suitable successor to Malesherbes, suffice to explain the final crisis.

In an absolute monarchy like that of Louis XVI., as well as in a modern parliamentary government, ministerial crises always hinge upon questions of confidence. Having lost the king's confidence, Turgot could regain it by no ministerial arrangement. It was too late to look for support in his crusade against the privileged, by introducing this or the other personage into the combination. Just as a parliamentary minister can do nothing after

a majority of the two Houses have once withdrawn their confidence, so Turgot had no resource left when the king no longer wanted him, and he would have been better advised had he submitted his resignation at the same time with Malesherbes. For some time the king had avoided any interview with Turgot; but instead of retiring, he wrote the king four secret letters, — memorials they may be called, — two of which have fortunately reached us. Of these letters Abbé Soulavie talked in his confused and lengthy history, averring that in one of them Turgot had told the king “a harsh, terrible, frightful truth,— he hints to this young prince, born faint-hearted and timid, that the fate of weak princes is that of Charles I. or of Charles IX.” Soulavie asserted that he had seen these letters among the papers of Louis XVI., the one containing the reference to Charles I. having been enclosed by the king “in an envelope sealed with the little seal-royal, with this inscription in the king’s hand: ‘Letters from Turgot.’” Soulavie’s assertion had never been taken very seriously by historians, when, in 1868, M. de Larcy discovered the entire text in Very’s Memoirs. This document is so curious, and throws so much light upon the last days of Turgot’s ministry, that we shall transcribe, far-

ther on, some passages from it. A more recent discovery has, moreover, dissipated any doubt that might still have been entertained touching the existence of these letters, and touching the authenticity of the one published by M. de Larcy. In the archives of Lantheuill Castle, Marquis Turgot has discovered a paper that once served as the envelope of a package of which nothing remains; on this wrapping stand written, in the hand of Malesherbes, the following observations:—

“This bundle contains four letters written to the king by M. Turgot at the time when the appointment of my successor was under discussion. M. Turgot wrote to the king with all the zeal of the most devoted minister, and with all the confidence one feels in the trustiest friend.

“He tells the king in the clearest terms his opinion of the men at the head of the administration, and of those qualified to fill the vacant place. And even when he speaks of his friends, he thinks it his duty not to conceal from the king the faults he knows them to have.

“These four letters are marked by the austere virtue; but it would be very vexatious for those of whom he speaks to have these confidential remarks published, and certainly

nothing is more contrary to M. Turgot's intentions than to have written notes of what he thought it his duty to say to the king alone.

"For my own part, I have no personal interest in the matter, for he praises me unreservedly. This is surely not because he did not know me to have faults, for I have many; but as I was about to retire from office, the interests of the royal service did not require that they be mentioned; therefore they were passed over. But there are several persons mentioned here in whose behalf I demand the most absolute secrecy, although they have not asked me to do so, not knowing what is said of them; and those for whom I do not presume to speak have no less right to request the family to suppress these documents. Nor need M. Turgot's family feel any regret; for these are not memorials by him setting forth his principles of administration, — such memorials are very precious. These treat only of the necessity of maintaining authority, — an argument in the mouths of all at that time; they treat of the application of the principles set forth in his long memorials; they treat of the characters of individuals, — and all this does not deserve preservation.

"I hope that the letters themselves, writ-

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oblivion. If the reverse occurs, it will not be Turgot's fault nor that of his family; but they ought not to have to reproach themselves with contributing to this result by the preservation of the minutes. I even exhort my lord the Marquis Turgot to forbear reading them himself; I repeat to him that he will sacrifice nothing by this course. I read them only seven or eight days after having been intrusted with them, and now I wish I had not read them, so much do I fear lest, in case the minister's secrets should one day be divulged, I should be accused of having done it. I add that, since these secrets are those of the king as well as those of the minister, it is due to the king as a mark of respect that these minutes be burned, if possible, in the presence of some one who can certify the fact to his Majesty."

The papers contained in this wrapper are evidently the minutes of the letters—now lost—seen by Soulavie in 1793. These minutes were doubtless burned, as Malesherbes advised. The copy of one of the four letters was probably sent to Very by Turgot himself, who had wished to inform Very in what terms he had insisted upon the latter's appointment to the Ministry of the Royal Household in place of Malesherbes. Another of the letters was copied by Soulavie and inserted in the

appendix to his "Historical Memoirs." It treats of the request of one Chanvallon, who was soliciting the reconsideration of a lawsuit, and was endeavoring to compromise the judge, Turgot's brother, and Turgot himself. This was a plot of Sartine's, and Turgot exposed it to the king in the following letter: —

"Last year M. de Sartine informed me of all the steps, almost asked my consent, which I was far from refusing, wished me to be present, against my will, at the private report made to him by M. Chardon concerning the whole affair, — and to-day everything takes place mysteriously and comes to light only in despite of M. de Sartine. I am no longer the one to be notified beforehand. Nevertheless, they know that I am not a man to ask for a denial of justice to any one ; but M. de Choiseul is the one to be notified before his departure for Chanteloup. Now, why this difference? It is easy to explain : last year, the entrance of M. de Malesherbes into the Ministry and Your Majesty's kindness to me gave them no hope of overthrowing me ; they wished therefore to win me over, or at least to appear to desire my friendship. This year, the retirement of M. de Malesherbes, the more decided union of all parties against me, my absolute isolation, the well-known hostility of M. de Miroménil and his influence over M. de Maurepas, all

the conduct of M. de Sartine in 1776 is so different from his conduct in 1775."

The other letter, of which Abbé de Very received a copy, was likewise dated April 30, 1776. This remarkable letter casts so new a light upon Turgot's relations with the king, that it deserves to be carefully considered:

"Sire, I will not conceal the fact that my heart is deeply wounded by Your Majesty's cruel silence last Sunday, after I had pointed out with such detail in my preceding letters the circumstances of my own and Your Majesty's position, the danger threatening your authority and the glory of your reign, and the impossibility of my continuing to serve you unless you come to my aid. Your Majesty did not deign to reply to me. . . . I have braved the hatred of all those who profit by abuses. So long as I could hope to retain Your Majesty's esteem by doing right, nothing was too hard for me. To-day, what is my recompense? Your Majesty sees how impossible it is for me to make head against those who injure me by the evil they do me, and by the good they keep me from doing by thwarting all my measures; yet Your Majesty gives me neither aid nor consolation. How can I believe either in your esteem or in your friend-

ship for me? I venture to say, Sire, that I have not deserved this. . . .

“Your Majesty has urged the need of reflection, and has pleaded lack of experience. Sire, you do lack experience. I know that at the age of twenty-two, and in your position, you have not the training in the judgment of men which private individuals obtain from habitual association with equals; but shall you have more experience in a week; in a month? And is your mind not to be made up until this slow experience has arrived? . . .

“I have pictured to you all the evils caused by the weakness of the late king; I have traced the course of the intrigues ending in the degradation of his authority. I venture to beg you to re-read that letter, and to ask yourself whether you wish to run the risk of equal dangers, — I may say of still greater dangers.

“At the age of forty, Louis XV. was in the plenitude of his authority, and there was no heat in men's minds. No corporation had tried his strength; and you, Sire, at twenty-two, find the parliaments already more restless, more audacious, more mixed up with court-cabals, than they were in 1770 after twenty years of encroachments and successes. The public mind is a thousand times more heated upon all sorts of questions, while your Ministry is weaker than that of your predecessor, and almost as much divided. Reflect, Sire, that in the course of nature you have fifty years to reign, and think of the possible progress of a disorder which in twenty years has reached such

of such experience, but learn to profit by that of others !

“ Sire, I owe to M. de Maurepas the place Your Majesty has given me, — never shall I forget it, never shall I be wanting in due deference to him ; but I owe a thousand times more to the state and to Your Majesty. To sacrifice such interests would be criminal. It costs me an extreme effort to tell you that M. de Maurepas is really guilty in proposing M. Amelot [to replace Malesherbes] ; at least, his weakness would be as fatal to you as a voluntary crime. . . .

“ At all events, Sire, it is so plain to me that I cannot remain alone and isolated as I am, that even if my duty did not urge me to tell you the whole truth, I could have no interest in keeping it from you. If in telling you the truth I displease you, I beg Your Majesty to write me or tell me so. I do not wish to shake your confidence in M. de Maurepas ; he deserves it in many ways, — by his experience, by his intelligence, by his great knowledge of affairs, by his prodigious memory, by his amiability, by his genuine attachment to the right and to your person.

“ But, Sire, do you know how weak is the character of M. de Maurepas ; how much he is governed by the ideas of those about him ? Every one knows that Madame de Maurepas, who has infinitely less mind but much more character, constantly inspires his will. Public opinion also makes an impression upon him almost incredible in the case of a man of

such intelligence, who ought to have an opinion of his own. He changed his mind ten times concerning the bed of justice, accordingly as he saw the Keeper of the Seals, or M. Albert, Lieutenant of Police, or myself. It was this wretched vacillation, of which the Parliament was fully apprised, that so prolonged the resistance of that body. Had Abbé de Very not contributed to fortify his mind, I should not have been surprised to see him relinquish all, and advise Your Majesty to yield to the Parliament. It is this weakness that moves him to fall in so readily with the clamor of the Court against me, and that deprives me of almost all power in my department. . . .

“Forget not, Sire, that it was weakness that brought to the block the head of Charles I.; that made Charles IX. cruel; that allowed the formation of the League under Henry III.; that made Louis XIII. a crowned slave; that makes a crowned slave of the King of Portugal to-day; and that brought about all the misfortunes of the last reign.

“Sire, you are deemed weak, and upon occasion I have feared lest your character had this defect; nevertheless, I have seen you, upon other more difficult occasions, exhibit genuine courage.

“You have said, Sire, that you lack experience; you have need of a guide. Such a guide must have light and strength; M. de Maurepas has the first of these qualities; in order that he may have the second, he himself needs a support. He does not feel this, — he even fears such support; I know it by the

appointment he has in view, and by the few efforts he has made to influence you in favor of Abbé de Very. I see that he fears precisely what would strengthen him. He fails to perceive that, after having isolated me, after having inspired Your Majesty with dislike for me, after having forced me to resign, the whole storm now brewing against me will beat upon him, and that he will fall at last, dragging your authority down with him, — perhaps after having shattered it. . . . Such, Sire, is your real condition : a Ministry weak and disunited, fermentation in all minds, the Parliaments in league with all the cabals and emboldened by a notorious weakness (Your Majesty has seen, in a letter I have confided to you, the very frank expression of their thoughts), revenues below expenditures, the stubbornest resistance to indispensable economy, no uniform policy, no continuity of plan, no secrecy in the resolutions of your Councils ; and it is in circumstances like these that there is proposed to Your Majesty a man of no talent, a man who has no merit but docility — to whom ? Not to that one of your ministers who shows some vigor, but to the honorable Keeper of the Seals, who by his insinuations increases the tendency to weakness. At such a time can Your Majesty fail to be struck by the dangers I have so plainly pointed out ?

“ Indeed, Sire, I do not understand you ; it is very well for them to tell you that I am hot-headed and visionary ; but does what I have been telling you resemble the discourse of a madman ? It even seems

to me that the measures I have carried out have succeeded, despite the clamorous opposition, precisely as I had announced; and if I am no madman, if there is any reality in the dangers I have pointed out, Your Majesty cannot, without being untrue to yourself, yield out of complaisance for M. de Maurepas. . . .

"I entreat you to reflect again before determining upon a choice bad in itself and fatal in its results. . . . If, in fine, it be my fate that this letter shall draw upon me Your Majesty's disfavor, I beg you to inform me of this yourself. In any case I count upon Your Majesty's secrecy."

To this letter the king made no more reply than he had made to the others of the same kind that Turgot had written him on the same day, or on the days immediately preceding. He had to choose between Maurepas and Turgot, and his choice was made beforehand, — it could not be altered by Turgot's last effort in writing to him with such bluntness. Far from it! The king must even have felt this to be an attempt to take possession of his will, and to govern by turning him out of the government.

On the 30th of April, the very day when he sent the king this fourth and last letter, Turgot wrote to Very, — saying nothing, as yet, of the supreme step he had just taken, — begging him

to come to Paris to work upon the mind of his old friend Maurepas for the purpose of obtaining a successor to Malesherbes from the ranks of the reformers. Ten days later, Turgot wrote Very that all was over, and that the new minister was definitively Amelot. Turgot still hoped, however, to have time to formulate a plan for reforming the royal household. "The plan will certainly not be adopted, and I shall demand my release." On the next day, another letter: "The Marquis de Noailles is Ambassador to England, M. de la Vauguyon to Holland; M. de Guines has the title of Duke, and is therefore white as snow."

At length, on the 12th of May, 1776, Turgot's colleague, Bertin, brought him an order from the king to resign his functions. Maurepas wrote him: "Had I been free, Sir, to follow my first impulse, I should have been with you. Commands from a higher source have checked me; I beg you to be assured of my concern about your situation." Turgot's reply begins with these words: "I have just received, Sir, the letter with which you have honored me; I do not doubt your concern in the event of the day, and am duly grateful." Two days later he writes to Very: "Your old friend has had me dismissed without waiting for me to

On the 18th of May, after having asked permission of the king, Turgot wrote him a letter which forms a worthy counterpart to that in which he had accepted the post of Comptroller-General two years before. He alludes to the four secret letters: "The proceeding on my part which seems to have displeased you has proved to you that I was bound to my place by no interested motive, for I could not be unaware of the risk I was running, and I should not have exposed myself to that risk if I had preferred my fortune to my duty. You have also seen by my letters how impossible it was for me to serve usefully in that place, and consequently to remain there, if you left me alone and without aid." It has been supposed that, in speaking of his "proceeding," Turgot alluded to his intervention in the affair of Count de Guines; but there can now be no doubt that the offensive proceeding was the correspondence, by which the king had been sharply stung.

Immediately after his disgrace Turgot retired to the Château de la Roche-Guyon, the home of the Duchess d'Enville; then he returned to Paris. The remaining five years of his life he passed in the study of science and of letters. He was deeply affected by the universal reproach that he had lost his influence

through the stiffness of his disposition,—in a word “by his maladroitness.”¹ Of this he speaks in his great letter to Dr. Price² (March 22, 1778):—

“I owe you double thanks, — first, for your work ; . . . secondly, for your kindness in withdrawing the imputation of maladroitness which you had mingled with the good you said of me in your additional observations. I might have deserved this, if you had meant no other maladroitness than that of not being able to discern the wires of intrigue that were pulled against me by people much more adroit in this line than I am, or expect to be, or wish to be. But it seemed that you imputed to me the maladroitness of having grossly shocked the public opinion of my nation ; and herein I think you did justice neither to me nor to my nation, where there is much more enlightenment than is generally supposed among you, and where it is perhaps easier than with you to win the public over to reasonable ideas.”

The opinion expressed by Dr. Price passed at that time almost without question. Until his death, and after, Turgot was thought to

¹ M. Say here appends a note quoting from a letter from Suard to Hume (May 28, 1776) accusing Turgot of “stubbornness and coldness.” See J. Hill Burton’s “Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume.” — TR.

² The Dr. Richard Price against whom Burke fulminates in his “Reflections on the Revolution in France.” — TR.

have failed for want of power to command himself, and because the asperity of his disposition prevented him from winning over those whose good-will was essential to success. This contemporary judgment must be revised by the generation born of the Revolution; for the friends and the collaborators, the opponents and the enemies of the great minister, confused his personal cause with that of his doctrines, and did not know that the imputed faults of character which brought about his fall were to become, fifteen years afterward, one of the chief reasons for the final triumph of his ideas. Long experience of government by opinion has taught us of the present day that the overthrow of a minister on a question of principle usually results in the formation of a party to take up his programme, and in giving strength to such a party, when circumstances have ultimately become more favorable, to realize the reforms which had seemed compromised by that very overthrow. The democracy that made the French Revolution certainly needed

tioned the principle of freedom of labor, which was opposed to the aspirations of certain Revolutionary leaders, who thought they could stop short of that principle without denying their love of equality.

After leaving office, Turgot devoted himself at first almost exclusively to the Academy of Inscriptions and Belles-Lettres, where he presided in 1777 as Vice-Director; and afterward to the literary studies that had been the delight of his youth. He loved to meet his numerous friends, although he called them, in the phrase of Bacon, "the thieves of his time." He eagerly sought the scientific works appearing throughout Europe. He studied higher geometry with Abbé Bossut, chemistry with Lavoisier, and astronomy with Rochon. Condorcet kept him apprised of what was going on at the Academy of Sciences.

When Franklin reached Paris, toward the close of 1776, Turgot often met him, and conversed with him about the constitutions of the different American States. He even wrote expressly for Franklin an essay on the taxation of consumable commodities. He also sent one day to Sartine an unsigned note on Captain Cook's third voyage of discovery, proposing that Cook's ships should be treated as

“ Captain Cook is probably on his way back to Europe,” wrote Turgot. “ Since his expedition has for its sole aim the progress of human knowledge, and therefore interests all nations, the king would show worthy magnanimity in not permitting its success to be compromised by the hazard of war.” Sartine secured the royal approval of this proposal; but neither the king nor Sartine ever knew that this generous thought had emanated from the disgraced minister.

During the first period of his retirement Turgot learned with profound grief that a reconsideration of his great reforms was intended. Hearing that there was talk of abrogating his edict for the suppression of the exclusive industrial corporations, he began a letter to Maurepas, but did not finish it. Could he hope for a hearing from those who had deprived him of power in order no longer to be annoyed by his pleas in behalf of reform? The unfinished draft has been found among his papers at Lantheuil Castle.

“ Notwithstanding all that I had heard, Sir, since my removal from the Ministry, of the plan attributed to you of engaging the king to revoke the edicts suppressing forced labor and the trade-guilds, I had never been able to persuade myself that you would

me that you could have entertained the thought of this, were I not assured that you have already consulted the Parliament about the new edicts, which are to recall those that formed the object of the last bed of justice. It will doubtless seem strange to you that I should think of writing to you on this occasion ; it is not from me that you expect advice, and I cannot presume that my advice will alter your opinion ; the very considerations that I am about to present are so simple, so palpably obvious, that it seems morally impossible that they should not have presented themselves to your mind. But the more natural and palpable they are, the more they conform to what I have always known your way of thinking to be, so much the more I am bound to believe that some extraordinary motive has made you shut your eyes to their evidence. I will therefore endeavor to recall you to yourself, to what you have a thousand times thought and said, to what you owe to the public, to the king, to your own reputation, and I will enlist your conscience against the passion which, permit me to tell you, conceals from you your own interest. Pardon this frankness, Sir ; it is not my intention to wound you with harsh truths ; but you know me well enough to judge that I cannot without deep grief see the destruction of a great good to which I have had the good-fortune to contribute, which the royal will sustained against the obstacles opposed to it, and which I had reason to think solidly established. To this interest I am certainly alive ; I venture also to be alive to the king's honor, — liable to be compromised

by a change so sudden, — which is dear to me both as a citizen and as one who has shared his confidence and his favor.”

From this point the letter was not continued. Turgot suffered the pain of seeing his edicts annulled. Had he lived ten years longer he would have had the joy of seeing them take their place anew, and forever, in our code of laws. But his health was precarious, and his attacks of gout were incessantly renewed; he had but a few months to live. His last days were occupied with poetry. He had finished his metrical version of the fourth book of “The Æneid,” and was making rhymed translations from Horace. From his death-bed Turgot dictated to Dupont de Nemours a verse translation of the ode “Æquam Memento.”¹

Turgot died at Paris on the 18th of March, 1781, with the constancy of a man of whom Malesherbes could say that he had the heart of L'Hôpital and the head of Bacon. He

¹ “ Un même torrent nous entraîne ;
Un même gouffre nous attend.
Nos noms jetés confusément
S'agitent dans l'urne incertaine.
Tôt ou tard le sort les amène
Et désigne à chacun son tour,
Pour passer l'onde souterraine
Dont le voyage est sans retour.”

was first interred in the Church of the Incorables, Sèvres Street, according to M. de Nymarck; but his coffin was afterward removed to the graveyard at Bons, in Normandy. It is a family tradition that at the time of the requisition for lead in 1793 his coffin was drawn from the tomb and opened for the purpose of taking out the leaden case. Several of those engaged in this operation had known Turgot. They were frightened to find his body in a perfect state of preservation, and it seemed to them that his still living features were reproaching them for disturbing his rest. At this sight they left the work unfinished and fled. The municipal authorities hastily placed the coffin in a grave, but without marking the spot. All that we know to-day is that Turgot sleeps in a forgotten corner of this little country graveyard.

CHAPTER VIII.

ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REACTION AFTER
TURGOT'S DEATH. — DEFINITIVE TRIUMPH IN
1789. — NEW REACTIONS UNDER THE EMPIRE,
THE RESTORATION, AND THE REPUBLIC OF
FEBRUARY (1848).

TURGOT could have succeeded only by the authority of the king; and the concessions that a more flexible minister might have made in a spirit of conciliation to Court and Parliament would have had no useful effect toward the ultimate success of his enterprise. The Old Régime, after its slow transformations, consisted, in the eighteenth century, of a despotism tempered by the privileges enjoyed by certain bodies, such as the nobility, the clergy, the magistracy, the army, the merchant-guilds, etc. The destruction of these privileges, and the exchange of the special guaranties they secured to a certain number of individuals for a general guaranty to the whole nation, — such was Turgot's aim. "The

cause of the evil, Sire," said he in his Memorial upon Municipalities, "lies in the fact that your kingdom has no Constitution; you might govern like God, by general laws."

Nothing short of a revolution—the overthrow of the old order of things—could realize such progress; and this revolution could have come about without violence only on condition that the two powers, the two active principles of that order of things, the king and the privileged classes,—or one of the two,—should have consented to undertake it. Turgot could not reckon upon the privileged classes, who were at that time far from dreaming of such a night as the 4th of August, 1789, who fancied themselves very strong, and had no idea of disarming. Consequently he had no chance of success except by persuading the king to place himself at the head of the movement, and to stand firm there. But if Louis XVI. had at times a feeling of what he might venture to do in that direction, he never had the strength to pass from sentiment to action. Might not Turgot have overcome the hesitation of the king if he had humored the personages of Court and Parliament, and if he had not fallen out successively with everybody? To put the question thus is to emphasize the contradiction. His aim was to abolish an

order of things resting upon the very ones whom, we are told, he ought to have humored. To humor them would have been to do homage to them in a certain way, and to respect their authority as if it had been regular; while he wished, on the contrary, to destroy them as organs of government, and to disable them from exercising, as a body, any influence whatever upon the administration.

After Turgot's fall the reasons which, instinctively or not, inspired the resistance of the privileged classes to his reforms, became apparent. The reaction was not limited to the abrogation of the edicts that had just been registered in the bed of justice; it pursued likewise a general political aim, namely, — to consolidate the system and to carry it to its ultimate consequences. After having served the reaction, Necker was swept away by it, as Calonne was afterward to be swept away. The Constitution of the state, patiently remodelled by the nobility and the Parliament, assumed a more and more tangible form. The French monarchy degenerated into an oligarchy of privileged masters of the crown, powerful enough to prevent the king — even had he so desired — from playing the part of protector of the people against the encroachments of the great.

Nothing can be at once more distressing and more extraordinary than the reaction after Necker's first ministry. Never did the spirit of privilege show itself more exacting than in 1781. Till then, commoners had been permitted to serve as officers, and a goodly number of them had held an honorable place on the staff of the French army under Louis XIV., under Louis XV., and even in the first years of the reign of Louis XVI. The regulation of 1781 concerning army grades is more stringent than any preceding regulations. Whoever, in the future, would aspire to the rank of officer either in the infantry or in the cavalry, was bound to make proof of four degrees of nobility.

"Instead of gently yielding to the action of time, to the influence of enlightenment," wrote Sicyès in his famous brochure of 1788, "the nobility stiffens itself against them. It proposes to lose none of its privileges. What do I say? It extends them. . . . Quite recently they have absolutely presented to the nobility the posts of councillors and of chief-justices." Joly de Fleury, Necker's successor, pushed the narrowness of the reactionary spirit to its extreme limit. In a note accompanying his translation of Marcus Aurelius, he finds it strange that the most useful of all laws has not

yet been enacted. "This would have been to command men, on pain of the severest punishment, to restrain their natural curiosity within just bounds, and to forbid their speaking or writing upon subjects beyond the range of their intelligence."

The men who had heard Turgot, who had been his friends, his collaborators, who went into disgrace with him after having served in his ministry, could read in 1784 and again in 1786, — only three and five years, respectively, after his death, — a decree of the Parliament of Paris prohibiting the harvesting of grain with a scythe; while, touching manufactures, it was enacted that the length of all handkerchiefs woven in the kingdom should be precisely equal to their breadth. Reaction in the army, in the magistracy, in industry, — a reaction even in the direction of enforcing the feudal rights of lords, — the march toward the precipice was headlong and dizzy.

The reaction could not, however, at once strengthen privilege and fill the Treasury; ruin the Third Estate by oppression, and extort from it funds for feeding all abuses; open the pension-list largely to favorites, and make receipts balance expenditures. Calonne, amiable and shrewd as he was, was not the man to rescue the kingdom from the gulf in which it was

foundering. This man of many devices decided at length to return to the financial reforms of Necker and to the economic reforms of Turgot. For us, it is a recommendation of Calonne's plan that it really proceeded from the two ministers who had attempted to bring order out of the chaos of the Old Régime. "Why, this is sheer Necker that you are bringing me!" said the king, as he listened; and he might have added that it was also sheer Turgot.

Calonne's territorial subvention, bearing upon all landowners and upon all estates without exception or privilege, was nothing more or less than the land-tax of which Turgot was developing the plan at the very moment of his dismissal, and which was to have been the object of his next reform. It must also have been the plan of Malesherbes, if it be true that Malesherbes is the author of the Memorial in the Archives which says, speaking of the necessity of subjecting the privileged classes to taxation: "This evident truth has been felt by all administrators. It would have been felt by the whole nation, had the people been permitted to know and discuss their own interests." Calonne showed the nation the naked truth,

nation for the discussion of its own interests." But if Calonne had the ideas of Turgot and the shrewdness of Maurepas, if he united in himself saving virtues and pleasing vices, if he was of the Court without being any the less a philosopher, an economist, a statesman, how is that he did not succeed where Turgot failed? And if it may be said of him that he was the exemplar of all that Turgot is reproached with not being, if, according to the testimony of those who blame Turgot for inflexibility and haughtiness, Calonne possessed just what his illustrious predecessor lacked, why has Calonne not been held to deserve all the praises heaped upon Turgot, augmented by all the praises that are denied him? The reason is not far to seek: it is that the Revolution was not to be avoided by compromises with the privileged, came they from Calonne or from Turgot. History proves it, — Turgot would have lost by being a Calonne, and Calonne gained nothing by wishing to be a Turgot.

On the night of the 4th of August, 1789, the National Assembly decreed the reformation of the exclusive industrial corporations. On that famous night Turgot's apotheosis began. His faithful friend, Dupont de Nemours, became the inspirer of the Committee of Finance, and drew up the address to Frenchmen upon

direct taxes. The master-thought in the financial system of the Revolution, as it appears in the programme of Dupont de Nemours and in the deliberations of the National Assembly, is this thought of Turgot's: Taxation must be direct; taxes must therefore be assessed only upon visible wealth, and must give rise to no arbitrary act in their collection.

Article VII. of the law of 1791 puts in force again, in some sort, Turgot's edict concerning trade-guilds, and reproduces almost all its expressions: "On and after the 1st of April next following, every citizen shall be free to exercise whatever profession, art, or trade he may think fit, after having provided himself with a license, so long as he conforms to the regulations that may be made." Again, Article I., of the decree of June 14-17, 1791, definitively condemns the old industrial system. "The abolition of all kinds of corporations of citizens of the same condition and profession being one of the fundamental principles of the French Constitution, it is forbidden to re-establish them upon any pretext or in any form whatsoever." Meanwhile the germ of dissent was already perceptible among the reformers, — some devoted to freedom, granting it to their opponents as they assured it to them-

state, even to the oppression of individuals, — the Liberals and the Jacobins. Says Louis Blanc: “ Other Revolutionists were found, giving to liberty as understood by the Revolutionists of ’89 a new definition. We shall hear them saying, ‘ Liberty consists not in the *right*, but in the *power*, granted to a man to exercise and develop his faculties under the sway of justice and the safeguards of law.’ ”

Marat undertook the defence of the trade-guilds in his journal, “ The People’s Friend.” He said (March 16, 1791): “ Certainly nothing can be better than to free citizens from shackles that hinder the development of talent and that keep the unfortunate in poverty. But I know not whether this entire freedom, this exemption from all apprenticeship, all novitiate, for the exercise of a given trade or profession, be politically advisable. . . . The first result of these mad decrees is to impoverish the state by the decline of trade and manufactures; the second result is to condemn the consumer to eternal expenditures. . . . In any state which has not glory as its ruling motive, if from the desire to make a fortune be taken away the desire to establish a reputation, farewell to good faith; soon every profession and all traffic will degenerate into knavery. As, in that case, the sole thought of the manufacturer

and the vender is to make their goods salable, they deem it sufficient to give them a certain attractive look, and to offer them at a low price, without troubling themselves about genuine solidity and finish. . . . And as the goods have then neither value nor solidity, they must degenerate into botchwork, and so determine the consumer to make use of his freedom to purchase abroad."

Louis Blanc takes a different standpoint; he sees in Turgot's work, as resumed by the Constituent Convention of 1789, the triumph of individualism against fraternity. Thus in his "History of the French Revolution" he says: "The whole truth must be told. Turgot proclaimed the right to labor, — he proclaimed it in magnificent terms; in the future this will be one of his titles of honor. Do not be deceived, however; Turgot never went so far as to recognize the right to employment. He wished that the poor should be left free to develop their faculties, but he did not admit that society owed them the means of succeeding. He meant to destroy the obstacles that may arise from the action of authority, but he did not impose upon the state the obligation of serving as guardian to the poor, to the weak, to the ignorant. . . . What use to shout to the poor man, 'You have the right to labor,'

when he must answer by the inquiry, 'How am I to make use of this right?' " The self-styled school of fraternity reproached Turgot with thinking, first, that the whole duty of government is to destroy obstacles and then to let alone ;¹ afterward, with finding no guaranty against monopoly save isolation.

What hindered the Revolutionists, however, from returning to the guilds, and what compelled them, despite Marat and so many others, to maintain the work of Turgot, was that, as they plainly saw, the guilds involved a principle of exclusion and oppression; and that though, by corporative association, these bodies might constitute a kind of family, it was an exclusive family, which did not admit to its privileges all who had need to labor.

Napoleon could have no such scruples. There was consequently under the Consulate a marked and offensive reaction in favor of the corporations. The Council of State caused a great number of memorials to be laid before it in favor of the restoration of the trade-guilds, and Regnaud de Saint-Jean-d'Angély made himself their advocate.

Under the Restoration, the partisans of the corporations took heart again. In 1817 a lawyer named Levacher-Duplessis, who claimed

to act in the name "of thirty-four commercial and industrial professions," presented a petition to the king for the re-establishment of the merchants' companies and the guilds of art and trade. This petition rehearsed the arguments of the Parliament of 1776 and of the Royal Advocate Séguier, and referred to Turgot in a very strange style. Turgot was, it seems, "born with an inflexible and domineering disposition, and his opinions, taking color from his character, had degenerated into sectarianism." The corporations he had destroyed had been reconstructed after his disgrace, their abuses had disappeared, and they had rendered the greatest service to trade and industry. To these corporations, wisely regulated, Levacher and the Parisian merchants demanded a return. A bar must be placed against "that mercantile mania which precipitates into the career of industry a crowd of adventurers who dishonor it." This petition was examined by the Paris Chamber of Commerce, which remained faithful to the view it had several times expressed, "time and reflection having only strengthened, in this matter, the opinion of the Chamber." In 1821, a new petition, a renewed deliberation of the Chamber of Commerce, and a fresh affirmation of the unshaken convictions of its members

“The Chamber, deliberating upon this communication . . . and considering . . . moreover that the immense progress of French industry since the time when it was emancipated from the monopoly of guilds constitutes a sufficient warning of the danger of the proposed innovations in the legislation of the present time, . . . pronounces as in the past, and with the same unanimity, against the memorial addressed to the two Chambers.”

In February, 1848, the corporations came again into favor. Those who proclaimed the right to employment, and whose doctrine was summed up in the formula, “organization of labor,” seemed for a moment masters of the situation; but they frightened the nation, and their ideas perished in the days of June.

Thus Turgot's doctrines had passed unscathed through the epochs most perilous to liberal economic ideas, — the Convention, the Empire, the Restoration, the February Revolution. Napoleon would fain have made of the corporations — reconstructed and held in his iron grasp — an instrument of police; he caused a bill to this effect to be drafted, but he had to give it up. The Restoration filled with courage those who deplored the overthrow of the ancient institutions of France; nevertheless, the Restoration took no step

toward a return to the ancient industrial organization. All attempts successively miscarried on account of the general indifference, on account of the suspicion aroused by the claims of the spirit of monopoly, — which would satisfy a single interest by endangering all the rest, — and on account of fears of a popular and revolutionary tyranny.

It is to Turgot's memorable struggle in 1776 that modern France owes her escape from the reaction against the emancipation of labor. The blow he struck was mortal to the corporations. Their restoration after his disgrace was incomplete, inasmuch as the ancient guilds were not restored, the reaction consisting simply in authorizing or prescribing the formation of new associations. Their corporate spirit had been so thoroughly crushed that it was unable to rise again under Necker, under the Revolution, under the Empire, or under the Restoration.

If equality among citizens, admissibility to all employments, abolition of all social distinctions, must be considered necessary consequences of the French Revolution, and if these democratic conquests constitute in some sort what is called the Modern Régime, the same is perhaps not true of a system of interference with labor, with manufactures, or with com-

merce, proceeding according to general laws, and not extending to exclusive corporations a protection that would seem to restore a privilege of the Old Régime. Had such protection been extended to open associations, it might perhaps have been acceptable to those innumerable unknown actors in the Revolution to whom liberty usually meant the right to deny it to their adversaries. We may therefore believe that it was not from principle, but from a peculiar sentiment arising from their education, — a sentiment which they might well fail to transmit to their successors, — that the statesmen of the Revolution rescued our country from the reactions against freedom of labor. They were, in reality, still under the personal influence of the departed Turgot: he invisibly guided them; their economic conscience was in his keeping.

CHAPTER IX.

RADICAL SOCIALIST SCHOOL. — CATHOLIC ECONOMIC SCHOOL. — CONCLUSION: DIFFICULTY OF RECONCILING THE PRINCIPLES OF FREEDOM OF LABOR AND FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION.

THERE are to-day two schools that demand the re-establishment of the industrial corporations by the unrestricted application of the principle of freedom of association: the Radical Socialist school, and the Catholic economic school. Both these schools would extend the powers of the state beyond what economists consider the natural limit of these powers, with a view to state interference in labor problems; but the Radical Socialist school is inclined to recommend close corporations, and the Catholic economic school open corporations. Turgot is the great enemy at whom both schools strike. The one upbraids him with abolishing the privileges of the workingman, the other with failing to respect the workingman's freedom.

The French Catholic economic school grows out of the Christian German Socialism which sprang up in Prussia after 1848, and which professed to have found the solution of the social problem in the union of the Church, with her thousand forms of beneficence, and the State, penetrating, by means of taxation and by the organization of a number of local services, the inner life of the nation. Christian German Socialism opposed with equal warmth the liberal economic school of Adam Smith and J. B. Say, and the liberal political school, which, starting from England, has carried the system of representative parliamentary government to all parts of Europe.

Christian German Socialism has put forth several shoots. Bismarck professes to derive State Socialism from it. He said one day in the Reichstag: "What we want is not socialism; it is rather Christianity without phrases: the question is to give people, not hollow speeches, but something solid." The Austrian Catholics have been inspired by it. In 1875 the popular Convention of Lower Austria declared in a solemn resolution that "the social question can be solved only by legislative autonomy of the corporations in their own affairs, under the protection of a Christian government." Prince Lichtenstein, as

spokesman of the party, asked and obtained the re-establishment of obligatory corporations for petty industry. The bill concerning petty industry was carried in 1883, but the enactment of a law for the formation of local corporations for great industrial establishments was postponed.

The French Catholics have entered upon the same path as the Austrian Catholics, the long residence of the Count de Chambord in Austria contributing to this result. It must however be said that, in comparison with the Austrian Catholics, the French Catholics have made incontestable progress. The corporations which they demand are to be anti-monopoly, free, open, and based upon a very broad application of the principle of association. Turgot's great crime, in their eyes, is not that he suppressed the ancient guilds, — into which many intolerable abuses had evidently crept, — but that he prevented the re-organization of new associations free from the spirit of monopoly, whose sole aim should be the protection of their members.

This school asserts that family industry perished with the trade-guilds. Family industry was crowded out by the system of great industrial establishments which with its train of evils — pauperism, strikes, class conflicts, family dis-

organization, and the rest — has taken possession of our century. All the evil has come, they add, not from the abolition of corrupt and degenerate guilds, but from an oppressive Jacobin law, copied from Turgot's edict, Article XIV.: "All masters, companions, journeymen, and apprentices of the said corporations and guilds are forbidden to form any association or union among themselves, upon any pretext whatsoever."¹

When it is said that family industry has perished because freedom of labor isolates the workman, and because it permits employers to enlarge their workshops, to absorb all industry in immense mills and all trade in colossal shops, — when these extensions are referred to as the cause of all the miseries of our century, — there is a double exaggeration: first, in representing the family industry of the eighteenth century in a much too favorable light; secondly, in attributing to freedom of labor effects that it has not produced, and to the present time vices not peculiar to the present. The eighteenth century is pictured as if it had known neither wretchedness, nor class conflicts, nor labor troubles, nor strikes; as if the mo-

¹ This chapter may seem incomplete unless the reader bears in mind the concluding paragraphs of Chapter VI. See p. 172. — TR.

many of workingmen's families had been then much higher than now; as if journeymen had always been brothers, and apprentices always sons, to the virtuous masters who employed them, and who were not yet vexed by that greed for gain which is said to characterize the modern captains of industry.

The truth is that the condition of the laboring classes under the old system was neither happier nor more moral than to-day. Those who have studied the history of labor cannot doubt that the progress of the workingman's material welfare during the past century has been enormous, and that the progress of his moral welfare, though less rapid, has been considerable. The workingman of the nineteenth century has in these respects no reason to envy the workingman of the past. Moreover, it is a mistake to think that it was freedom of labor which disorganized family labor and gave birth to the great modern industrial establishments. Freedom of labor has, indeed, enabled industry to keep up with the growth of human needs, because it has put industry in a position to study and submit to the conditions of cheap production. But if family industry has disappeared, it is not the fault of freedom of labor, but because family industry was unable to produce cheaply enough. Is

the restoration of family industry desirable at the cost of a factitious enhancement in the prices of all the necessities of life, added to the natural and progressive increase in the expenses of a more intense existence? If we did not flinch at such a consequence, would it be possible to hope for success? Evidently, it is not to be thought of.

All discussions about excess of production, about the obligation imposed upon manufacturers to produce on a great scale in order to lessen the burden of general expenses on each article, are in reality of a different order from economic discussions. Their real subject is the increase of human needs, the taste for luxury, the progress of civilization, the destiny of the race. Those who deplore the development of industry on a great scale, deplore the growing needs of humankind; they would fain check this movement of the race, and they condemn the means employed by industry to satisfy these needs. But is it not idle to attempt to create man anew? Is it not Utopian to imagine that we can refuse mankind the gratifications they demand, on the ground that these gratifications are useless or opposed to morality? Such discussions have small practical value; they do not prevent mankind from moving on in obedience to

those natural laws which cannot be abrogated in a Chamber of Deputies.

The new schools are weak when they attack freedom of labor, — when they think to find in the suppression of freedom a remedy for the industrial disturbances of our time. They run a constant risk of relapsing into the vagaries of labor organization, to which they will find it difficult to rally public opinion in an era of discussion and of political liberty. They are stronger when they ask merely the common law and freedom. But what freedom is meant? Should not precautions be taken against the possible oppression of individuals by associations that are free to do anything? Turgot did not hold that man to be a wise servant of Freedom, who prostitutes the name of freedom by applying it to the power of imposing upon others anything to which a majority may be brought to consent. Here is what he wrote to Dr. Price in the letter of March 22, 1778:¹ —

“How happens it that you are about the first among your men of letters to set forth just notions of freedom, and to expose the fallacy of that notion, harped upon by almost all republican writers, ‘that freedom consists in being subjected to laws alone,’ as if a man were free who is oppressed by an unjust law?

¹ See Chapter VII. p. 103.

This would not be true, even supposing all laws to be the work of the assembled nation ; for, after all, the individual has also his rights, of which the nation can deprive him only by violence and by an illegitimate use of the general power. Although you have had regard for this truth and have expressed yourself upon it, perhaps it deserves of you a more extended development, considering the scant attention it has received even from the most zealous followers of Freedom."

I do not know how to conclude this discussion of Turgot more worthily than with these noble and courageous words.

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